

Ecotourism and Human-Bear Relations in Ontario: Working for Multispecies Respect and
Economic Sustainability

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Abstract

Relations between northern Ontario's human communities and black bears have often been violent, and hunting is promoted for economic and "safety" reasons. The Ontario spring bear hunt was previously banned but was recently reinstated, compounding concerns about human-bear conflict and bear management. Today, both human-bear conflict and the stagnation of the northern economy continue, despite increased killing of black bears in the spring hunting season. This thesis considers alternatives to the hunting of bears. Specifically, it assesses bear viewing programs and the added benefits of collaborative environmental agreements and accreditation programs. I explore the potential of these alternative programs to address human-bear conflict, to benefit local settler and indigenous communities, and to reduce resource exploitation in northern Ontario. The thesis is driven by two research questions: (i) what ecotourism policies, strategies, and programs are the most viable for Ontario? (ii) Which policies or programs offer the most potential for fostering solidarity within and across species, as well as economic, social, political, and environmental benefits for northern Ontario communities?

I consider these questions by utilizing a combination of targeted, semi-structured interviews and a multispecies reimagining of an Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) framework. Three industry specialists were interviewed in order to interrogate the policy benefits and limitations of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, as well as bear viewing programs within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary, and the Great Bear Rainforest. I argue that these programs offer important lessons and models that should be utilized and imitated in northern Ontario in

order to transform interspecies relations and mitigate ongoing conflict. The results confirm the educational, cultural, and economic value and importance of guided bear viewing and accompanying habitat protection. This study also reveals areas of possibility and incentive for locales seeking to transition into ecotourism.

Keywords: Human-bear relations, Ontario, bear viewing, ecotourism, humane jobs

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Chapter One

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Objectives and Research Questions

This study seeks to contribute knowledge and arguments that could help to improve human-bear relations and to discover and assess transformative alternatives and solutions to conflict. I challenge policy and rhetoric that promotes killing other species as a solution to economic and interspecies issues. The current study also problematizes claims that killing is the most effective solution to human-bear conflict and economic crisis. A primary objective of this research is to promote interspecies solidarity by illuminating the interconnected experiences of both human and nonhuman animals involved in bear viewing and ecotourism more broadly. Current relations between humans and black bears in Ontario are oppressive and hierarchical, with humans violently dominating and manipulating the existence of black bears for their own gain. This study ultimately aims to re-imagine and explore ways of transforming human-bear relations.

This research and analysis have been guided by the following questions:

1. What ecotourism policies, strategies, and programs are the most viable for Ontario?
2. Which policies or programs offer the most potential for fostering solidarity within and across species, as well as economic, social, political, and environmental benefits for northern Ontario communities?

II. Rationale

This study is timely and significant because northern Ontario has and continues to suffer from economic and environmental vulnerability. This study is propelled by manifold, multispecies concerns. First, northern Ontario has an exploitative and

unsustainable economic dependence on sanctioned hunting, deforestation, mining, and other resource extraction industries. Second, and most central to this study, human-bear conflict has reached a boiling point in northern Ontario, even as hunting continues. It is therefore important to illuminate alternative relations and economic solutions, and to uncover evidence and examples showing that bear hunting has become obsolete and even disadvantageous economically and politically. This study is rooted in a recognition that there is an urgent need for innovative economic alternatives to lessen resource and species exploitation, especially in light of economic downturn, climate change, and resource depletion in the province.

Human-Bear Conflict

First and foremost, the central reason for this study is the Ontario spring bear hunt. Its many shortfalls reveal the need for better solutions to address human-bear conflict and interspecies violence in northern Ontario. Cancelled by the Conservative government in 1999, and then reinstated again by the Liberals in 2014, Ontario's spring bear hunt has caused disagreement and outrage across the province. Beginning in the 1930s, Ontario introduced black bear spring hunting seasons in order to draw non-resident hunters into the province and to support the tourism industry. Black bears were ruthlessly bounty hunted for nearly twenty years until 1961 when the province classified them as "big game" and began to restrict black bear hunting to specific seasons. After several years of opposition and campaigns against the spring bear hunt by environmental and animal welfare organizations, it was cancelled in 1999 (Commito, 2015). A Nuisance Bear Committee and Bear Wise program were then established to address human-bear conflict, but these have since had their funding cut.

Table 1: Ontario Black Bear Hunting Between 1990-2016			
Year	Hunting Licenses Sold	Estimated Hunters	Estimated Black Bear Harvest
1990	24,312	18,489	5,562
1991	23,861	18,550	5,944
1992	23,842	19,066	6,562
1993	20,851	17,094	6,292
1994	25,726	19,814	6,570
1995	26,082	20,614	7,622
1996	22,610	18,671	5,214
1997	22,252	18,069	5,642
1998	22,277	22,214	6,353
1999	17,322	16,109	4,313
2000	18,239	15,252	4,442
2001	19,919	18,613	5,486
2002	19,661	19,369	4,845
2003	21,145	20,985	5,415
2004	20,594	21,174	5,254
2005	21,749	20,279	6,110
2006	20,914	18,602	5,371
2007	22,730	19,550	6,204
2008	22,236	18,325	5,247
2009	22,563	21,104	5,665
2010	22,236	21,691	5,724
2011	22,381	18,175	5,328
2012	21,261	18,664	5,144
2013	20,851	18,331	4,699
2014	22,218	20,598	5,006
2015	25,799	24,845	6,603
2016	28,140	28,885	8,334
Total	601,771	533,132	154,951
Note: Harvest numbers are estimates based on replies received from a sample of hunters and are therefore subject to statistical error. Harvest numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number.			

Table 1: Data supplied by Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Following the defunding of the Bear Wise program in 2012, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and the Ontario government decided to reintroduce the spring bear hunt as a limited pilot project in 2014. First, the government argued that this was due to concerns about human-bear conflict raised by northern

communities which often involved black bears entering human communities due to garbage and other food attractants (Commuto, 2015, May 1; Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Oct. 30, 2015). The MNRF also claims that the pilot project will “increase the economic benefits derived from bear hunting for tourist outfitters and local economies” (Environmental Registry, Oct. 30, 2015). The MNRF frames black bears as “natural resources” to be sustainably harvested, and emphasizes the economic benefits of doing so for tourist outfitters, hunters, and northern communities in Ontario (Environmental Registry, Oct. 30, 2015). Indeed, Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, provided the following rationale for expanding the spring bear hunt pilot project in October, 2015: “Managing the bear population responsibly through an expanded pilot program would allow us to gather further information to assess the impacts of an early black bear season on concerns voiced by northern communities about human-bear conflicts, and to support economic growth and tourism in northern Ontario” (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Oct. 30, 2015).

The spring bear hunt pilot project was then expanded for five years in 2016 and will now take place until 2020 (“Hunting notices and...,” 2017). The explicit purpose of its expansion was the promotion of tourism for economic gain and previous limitations on non-resident hunters and restricted hunting zones were lifted. Coincidentally, it has recently been exposed that the Ontario Liberal government has been squandering the licensing fee funds collected from hunters and anglers which are meant to be used by the Ministry of Natural Resources for conservation (Brown, 2016). A “Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account” of \$70 million dollars a year, formed in 2005 and comprised of revenue from hunting and fishing licensing has been dwindled away, without

transparency and with many of the receipts still missing (Miner, 2016). “A local citizens’ group, the Aylmer District Stakeholder Committee, discovered through freedom-of-information requests that it had been spent on things such as the purchase and sale of a house (\$65,000) and psychologists (\$12,251)” (Brown, 2016). While the Liberal Government and the MNRF claim that funds from an expanded spring bear hunt and increased sales of bear tags are needed, it is unclear how or if these funds are even being allocated to benefit northern communities.

In addition, the MNRF continues to permit bear baiting practices during the spring and fall bear hunting seasons (“Hunting notices and...,” 2017), despite having stated that it can pose a risk to public safety (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Oct. 30, 2015). According to Ontario’s Bear Wise, bear baiting is “the act of intentionally placing natural or artificial food, or alternatively non-food materials such as scent lures for the purpose of attracting bears to a specific location enhance hunter harvest” (“Use of Bait...,” 2009, p. 1). This contradiction is noteworthy since the MNRF claims that reducing human-bear conflict is one of the central purposes of reinstating the spring bear hunt, yet the baiting of bears is seen by many as not only unethical, but dangerous because it draws bears closer to human communities. Moreover, it conditions bears to unnatural human food sources, perpetuating so-called “nuisance bear” activity. This mismanagement of revenue and continued interspecies conflict appears to invalidate much of the MNRF’s reasoning for reinstating and expanding the hunt, as funds are already being carelessly squandered and human-bear conflict is increasing.

Human-bear conflict is a problem infused with anthropocentric and positivist rhetoric. Liberal Member of Provincial Parliament Bill Mauro introduced a private

member's bill that reinstated the hunt and claimed, without evidence, that the spring bear hunt would "reduce the likelihood that aggressive bear activity will result in physical harm or death to people in Ontario" ("Mauro Introduces Bill...", 2013). The spring bear hunt was later renewed and expanded by Premier Kathleen Wynne, and multiple political parties were apparently "fearful that any opposition to a renewal of the spring hunt could endanger their chances in key northern ridings" (Walkom, 2014). Kathleen Wynne used claims similar to that of Bill Mauro to gain votes from northern Ontario, naming black bears as a growing threat to public safety in order to justify the hunt renewal to southern voters (Walkom, 2014). The reinstatement and expansion of the spring bear hunt was, most likely, supported for the purpose of gaining constituent appeal and votes from rural and northern communities.

The fact remains that reports of conflict between human populations and black bears in Ontario have grown in the last decade despite increased black bear hunting. News coverage of human-bear conflict have also increased dramatically (Commito, 2015, May 1). A reliance on representations from the MNRF, OFAH and animal control services, rather than sources and experts who advocate on behalf of the bears as individuals, has normalized the practice of killing or "sacrificing" black bears in situations of human-bear conflict (Molloy, 2011, p. 7). This is also used to justify increased killing of black bears in the name of the economy. In this context, the supposed reduction of human-bear conflict as a justification for the spring bear hunt must be critically examined. Furthermore, the MNRF constructs the black bear as an 'it', a 'thing' of inconvenience, to be avoided and removed, rather than being shown to have moral worth or agency as distinctive, sentient individuals. These representations also reinforce

the positivist notion that all bears in all contexts are dangerous. Positivist and discursive constructions of bears by the MNRF newsroom may also directly impact their lived experiences (Molloy, 2011). Positivism puts forth the notion that nature is knowable, predictable, and can be controlled. MNRF news representations of human-bear conflict often fail to investigate the underlying causes of it and occurrences of “nuisance” bears in human-occupied areas. The causes of these types of conflict include, but are not limited to industrial habitat destruction, climate change, natural food source shortage, urban sprawl, and the resulting displacement of bears into areas dominated by human animals (Knight, 2008). Urban sprawl, dirty garbage cans, the availability of bird seed, pet foods, and human food left outside in urban areas are also some causes of these encounters and conflicts in Ontario according to Bear Wise (“Report a Bear...,” 2015). In other words, the issue is often avoidable human actions or negligence.

In this context, it is a critical time to problematize the spring bear hunt and, in particular, to use a sociological lens to identify and assess alternatives that could address the needs and rights of Northern people, including settlers, First Nations communities, and, equally as important, the bears themselves. Multispecies solutions must be identified in order to remedy economic decline, to end the spring bear hunt, and protect northern Ontario’s landscapes, waterways, and the species who rely upon them.

Hunting and Resource Extraction

In addition to the problem of the spring bear hunt, there is a clear and pressing need to address northern Ontario’s tendency to rely on damaging solutions to economic declines, and failure to consider less harmful economic alternatives. According to the Northern Development Ministers Forum (NDMF), northern Ontario “covers

approximately 89% of Ontario's land mass, and is home to around 745,000 people representing 7% of the provincial population, 29% of Ontario's francophone population, and 43% of the province's Aboriginal population. Mining continues to drive economic growth in the region, but many opportunities exist for expanding and diversifying all sectors of the economy" (Northern Development Ministers Forum, n.d.). Northern Ontario is made up of several key municipalities, including Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Timmins, and Kenora, which rely heavily on the industries of mining, forestry, and tourism for revenue. Notably, tourism is already a significant part of the economy and employment in Ontario. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Ontario has supported "over 360,000 jobs in 2013. In 2012, the industry accounted for 5.2 percent of provincial employment, making it the 14th largest employer in the province (Boutilier, 2016, p. 13). For northern Ontario specifically, "Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay are Northern Ontario's leaders in terms of overall tourism-related employment. As of 2011, Greater Sudbury supported 28,320 tourism-related jobs, while Thunder Bay supported a further 26,375. On the other hand, Manitoulin, Rainy River, and the Sudbury District were the smallest sites for tourism employment" (Tourism Northern Ontario, 2014, p. 10). The Northern Development Ministers Forum (n.d.) claims that "Northern Ontario's vast tracts of pristine wilderness, thousands of lakes and diverse landscape position it to take advantage of the growing market in outdoor recreation and tourism experiences." The current study argues that these benefits may be amplified with the implementation of appropriate ecotourism and bear viewing programs.

Northwestern Ontario's employment is shrinking due to the mining sector's downturn and 2016 "will mark the second straight year of employment declines in Northwestern Ontario" specifically (Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2016). Northern Ontario's economy is driven by primary resource extraction and the downward trend of key metal prices exacerbates challenges (Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2016). The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (2016) argues that these factors, in combination with First Nations' communities' resistance to unfettered mining, inadequate public investment in infrastructure, and the falling Canadian dollar are the reasons for the worsening of Northern Ontario's economy. Both fortunately and unfortunately, the forestry sector is increasing in profitability and competitiveness, which will likely lead to further deforestation in the province. Ultimately, this could damage any potential for ecotourism and viewing programs and should be kept in mind. Overall, it is clear that Northern Ontario's economy is in need of new economic alternatives that better the lives of northern communities, protect resources, and I will argue, improve human-bear relations.

The crisis of climate change also means there is an urgent need to protect ecosystems, humans, and nonhuman animals. In fact, climate change provides important incentives for ecotourism and the reduction or cessation of resource extraction. Northern Ontario's economic dependence on resource extraction, as well as hunting, is being threatened by the deleterious effects of warming climate. Numerous scholars have explored the impacts of climate change on wildlife and ecosystems and the resulting challenges for conservation (e.g. Cristine & Kerr, 2011; Prowse et al., 2009; Schneider & Root, 2002; Wilsey et al., 2013). Climate change undermines biodiversity, and exposes

millions of species to a greater risk of extinction. Biodiversity is considered to be the “level of variability within and among species and within and among ecosystems,” which is quite literally the diversity of life (McKinney et al., 2010, p. 3). As the global climate becomes increasingly warmer, and combines with other anthropogenic harms to wildlife, the number of species at risk will grow exponentially (Allison et al., 2014, p. 2).

Specifically, Ontario’s protected areas and ecosystems are already changing and being affected by climate change. According to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, “Climate change is bringing not just changes in temperature, but also changes in precipitation and in the frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme weather and climate events. Ontario has seen an increase in prolonged heat events, heavy rainstorms, and windstorms (Ebi, Anderson, Berry, Paterson, & Yusa, 2016 p. A11). In addition, the MNRF states that changes are occurring in tourist and resident recreation in northern Ontario as “summer activities such as camping and swimming may be affected by poor water quality and heat events,” “spring and fall recreational use may become more popular,” and “as the winter season shortens and snow cover becomes less reliable, opportunities for winter activities may decline” (“Climate change and...,” 2016). By switching to renewable energy and environmentally-friendly economic ventures, such as ecotourism, it may be possible to mitigate these effects. Ecotourism emphasizes sustainability and ecologically responsible practices, making this a compelling possible alternative worthy of greater consideration.

Furthermore, climate change will undoubtedly impact the profitability and reliability of hunting as an economic venture, particularly the spring bear hunt, as ecosystems and multiple species become further threatened. Scholarly research on

anthropogenic climate change has revealed that it is causing and will continue to cause species extinction at alarming rates. According to Jeremy Hamce (2011), “A new study in the Proceeding of the National Academy of Science has found that by the time today’s infants are 90 years old (i.e. the year 2100) climate change could have pushed over 11 percent of the world’s species to extinction” (p. 1). Climate change, in addition to already devastating effects of “habitat loss, over-exploitation, pollution, invasive species,” and other concerns, will have harmful impacts on wildlife and biodiversity, and this includes bears. Changes in temperature, precipitation, and sea ice are already affecting various species, particularly vertebrates, and this will continue (Mora et al., 2013, p.1). It is important to note that we do not in fact know how many types of species inhabit the earth with humans, but that climate change could result in the extinction of millions of other species in the near future, including those who we currently exploit and kill for profit. Therefore, hunting black bears and other animals in Ontario will not in fact conserve or protect them from the massive threats associated with climate change and industry. However, ecotourism may have the potential to transform northern Ontario’s economy by shifting attention from extractive industry, sanctioned hunts, and resource exploitation to more sustainable, ethical, and innovative practices.

III. Key Concepts and Terminology

Nonhuman animals

It is important to elucidate the ways in which my language and use of terms differentiates from other scholarly works, particularly in literature on tourism and wildlife management. Firstly, and in agreement with Kheel (2008), my use of reflects nonhuman

animals' sentience, agency, and individuality. As a result, I depart from the language used in the natural sciences and in wildlife management, and the English language in general. I refer to those who are traditionally termed "wildlife," "big game species" or more broadly as "animals," alternatively as "other animals," "individuals," or by their specific species in order to allude to our kinship and their distinct identities (Kheel, 2008, p. 6). This is critical because "language conveys (and reproduces) the attitudes and practices of the societies in which it evolves...the devaluation of other-than-human animals is an inescapable aspect of the English language. The term "animal," for example, is usually employed with little awareness that humans also are animals" (Kheel, 2008, p. 6). The use of the aforementioned de-individualizing terms, including any reference to other animals as "that" or "it," will only be used when critiquing or referring to the ideas of other authors, or in direct quotes from said authors.

The many similarities and differences within and between species is blurred by the broad term, "animals" (Coulter, 2016a, p. 11). Humans tend to assign aggregate categories to other animals as species, while disregarding their individuality. This is a longstanding part of the English language according to Kheel (2008), as can be seen in the term "wildlife." Undomesticated nonhuman animals are collectively considered to be "wildlife," and similar to the use of the term "animals," this term results in the erasure of and blurring of difference between other animals as species and as individuals.. Even referring to an individual nonhuman animal by their species name, such as a "bear," can ultimately "fail to respect subjective identity" (Kheel, 2008, p. 7). In particular for this study, when referring to other animals of the species "*Ursus Americanus*," also known as north American black bears, I will seek to "avoid the use of a singular term to refer to

animals in the aggregate” wherever possible (Kheel, 2008, p. 7). When the term “black bear” or “bear” is used, I refer specifically to their geographical location and any alternative names given to them locally in order to recognize difference. Alternatively, I will refer to brown bears or grizzly bears by their species name when appropriate, for lack of a better option, in order to avoid erasing the differences between them. When referring to both black bears and grizzly bears generally, I simply use the term “bears.” I do my best to avoid erasing difference between and within species.

Furthermore, the language used to refer to other animals as species and as individuals is important because, “all social, political, and economic systems are socially constructed, not naturally determined... too many humans have often used their intellectual abilities and technologies to cause harm to other people and animals” (Coulter, 2016a, p. 9). While I may refer to nonhuman animals as “other animals,” which can also be viewed as problematic, there are important differentiations to make between human and nonhuman animals as individuals and as a species. That said, there is a danger in equating the two, as “an imprecise or decontextualized emphasis on humans as animals can contribute to or reproduce incorrect naturalistic ideas and explanations for people’s behaviors which stem from cultural patterns, processes of socialization, and political and ethical choices” (Coulter, 2016, p. 10). It is thus important to recognize that the behaviors of humans are socially rather than biologically determined.

My language reflects my commitment to a balanced, intersectional, and multispecies analysis of the issues and relationships being studied. Essentially, the language used to discuss other animals and interspecies relations has the potential to help discursively disrupt, or preserve their current state and normalized patterns of injustice.

So while my language may appear to erase difference between species in some areas, this is not my intention, as other animals do not need to be similar to humans for our concern and empathy to extend to them as individuals. As Coulter (2016a) so eloquently states, “we can and should make socially determined political decisions about how we act and treat others within and across species, whether they are similar to or different from us” (p. 10). Thus, my language is meant to reflect my commitment to a multispecies analysis and interspecies solidarity.

Humane Jobs & Interspecies Solidarity

A concept coined by Coulter (2016a, 2016b), and one which will be referred to repeatedly in this study, is that of “humane jobs.” When using the term “humane jobs,” I am referring to “jobs that are good for both people and animals” and work that “contribute[s] to moving the labor force away from jobs that are damaging to people, animals, and the planet” (Coulter, 2016a, p. 163). The concept of “humane jobs” is also intended to “emphasize the need for a longer and larger conversation about job creation, job quality, and dignity across species” including both human and nonhuman animal workers (Coulter, 2016a, p.3). This concept provides inspiration for transforming human relations with other animals in the tourism industry, and recognizing the important role that other animals, specifically black bears, play in ecotourism work and the economy at large.

The concept of “humane jobs” is essentially an extension of, and inspired by the concept of “interspecies solidarity.” “Interspecies solidarity” is proposed by Coulter (2016a) “as an idea a goal, a process, an ethical commitment, and a political project” (p. 150). Furthermore, although different from other animals, we must expand our empathy,

consideration, and understanding in fostering solidarity with all species (Coulter, 2016a, p. 150). I am in agreement and it is my position that we have an ethical imperative to do so. The importance of this concept in the current study is clear, and “the employment of interspecies solidarity challenges us to understand what animals are thinking and feeling, and to change ‘business as usual’ so as to respect them” (Coulter, 2016a, p.154).

As a demonstration of solidarity with North American black bears individually and collectively, the current study seeks to challenge the “business as usual” pattern that plagues human-black bear relations, the Ontario spring bear hunt, and wildlife management practices more generally. Interspecies solidarity is “both a path and the outline of a destination that encourages new ways of thinking and acting, individually and collectively, that are informed by empathy, support, dignity, and respect. Its precise meaning and applicability will vary across time and space, and be shaped by the particular participants and contexts” (Coulter, 2016a, p. 153). In keeping with this concept, the current study aims to disrupt normalized wildlife management protocols and the violent foundation of human- bear relations. Coulter (2016a) maintains that “the promise of interspecies solidarity means that animals cannot be seen as subordinates or as tools, and their needs and desires must be taken seriously through changes in perceptions and practices, and through regulation and enforcement” (p.155). This concept has provided inspiration for, and is encouraged through the current study.

IV. Positionality and Ethical Commitments

In keeping with an intersectional approach, it is also imperative that I acknowledge my relative privilege and how it influences my intellectual work including

my research process, objectives, choice of theoretical lenses, and overall project. I am a white settler and occupier on stolen indigenous land, known as Turtle Island. I am an educated, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgender, and heterosexual woman. My positionality, in combination with my ethical commitments, has led me to choose this specific topic. They also influence my analysis, and my commitment to interspecies solidarity, to finding workable solutions, and to considering the experiences and needs of local settler and indigenous working class communities.

Ethical Commitments

My interest in this topic and passion for this project extends from my ethical commitment to alleviating the suffering of all species, both human and nonhuman. I am aware, however, that I can never fully understand the experiences or feelings of other animals, including bears. For this reason, my interviews were carefully selected in order to speak with specialists who have worked alongside and with individual bears, while recognizing that they themselves convey biases, have limitations of their own, and may not illuminate the lived experiences of bears as well as other specialists such as animal ethnographers. At the same time, my commitment to fostering solidarity with both human and nonhuman animal communities does not affect my willingness to seek out and attempt to understand data and perspectives that run in direct conflict with my own. For example, I am opposed to the killing of bears for economic or political gain, yet some of my interviewees hold differing positions.

Thus, my position on hunting and wildlife management has changed continuously throughout the research process and likely will continue to evolve. Specifically, I understand that it would be inappropriate and unjust as a white settler to impose my

feelings about hunting and interspecies justice on indigenous communities. I seek to stand in solidarity with First Nations, and fully support their distinct perspectives, traditions, and independence. Essentially, my commitment to fostering interspecies solidarity does not supersede the need to acknowledge my position as a white settler under colonialism, and respect the experiences and sovereignty of indigenous peoples whose land I currently occupy.

My position

The questions driving this project stem from my interest in expanding analysis of human-animal conflict and the impacts of policy across species lines by using a multispecies lens. As a researcher, I feel that I have an ethical imperative to identify solutions to anthropocentric practices and institutions, rather than merely contributing to decade-long scholarly debates. I seek to move beyond static theory. I also recognize that my assessment of proposed solutions and their potential impacts on various communities may be somewhat limited by my own worldview, positionality, and lived experiences. For instance, my commitment to finding potential solutions that benefit local and indigenous communities will likely result in a partial assessment, as the specific voices of those groups are lacking in this paper. My interpretation of nonhuman animal experiences is limited in a similar way, in that I cannot speak about their experiences and needs with absolute certainty. At the same time, I am particularly critical when assessing case studies in an attempt to be as thorough as possible, and as a result of my use of multiple theoretical lenses.

Furthermore, as a relatively privileged university student and white woman settler conducting this research, I cannot fully understand the experiences of indigenous

communities under colonialism and oppression. Still, I am committed to using my own relative privilege to act in solidarity with other human and nonhuman animals experiencing oppression. I am passionate about working towards justice and freedom for all species, human and nonhuman. I am also deeply opposed to the othering, exploitation, and domination of other animals, especially for the purpose of economic gain.

Consequently, I am determined to find alternatives to the spring bear hunt that benefit and honour indigenous communities and other marginalized groups as it is my goal to build alliances and understanding. This passion and positionality has led me to critically examine the Ontario spring bear hunt in hopes of discovering intersectional ecotourist alternatives that benefit human and nonhuman animals. My commitment to ending multispecies injustice has inspired me to study and work towards real social change.

The current study recognizes Canada's history of colonialism and both the ongoing oppression and resistance of indigenous communities. I attempt to avoid praising or perpetuating forms of ecotourism or practices that will further harm or force indigenous communities to assimilate into Western ideas of progress. The tourism industry has exploited and often further disempowers indigenous communities, and a tumultuous relationship exists between them. Thus, I understand the importance of using a decolonial lens to assess ecotourist and bear viewing programs and to include the perspectives and voices of First Nations communities whenever possible. Ultimately, my interpretation of data and the appropriateness of alternatives to the spring bear hunt for local communities are influenced by my social location as a white settler woman. Although I attempt to include the voices and perspectives of other communities, I recognize that the "experts" whom I interviewed are all white settler men with western

knowledge and that the absence of indigenous interviewees and traditional knowledge limits my analyses.

Chapter 2: Literature Review & Context

This chapter summarizes key themes and arguments of pertinent scholarly works and government publications on the following: the history of black bear management and relations in Ontario; gender and political economy in Ontario; human-animal relations and human-bear conflict; ecotourism and wildlife/bear viewing.

I. History of Ontario Black Bear Management/Relations

Human-wildlife tensions and human-bear conflicts in particular have received scholarly attention across disciplines. Sociological researchers studying human-wildlife relations in Ontario highlight dynamics of compassion and conflict, and argue that human-bear relations are greatly influenced by economic and political interests (Dunk, 2002; Lemelin, 2008; Dunk, 2010). Not surprisingly, there are often ideological debates and differing perspectives between animal rights advocates and hunting advocates, as well as urban southern and northern communities in Ontario (Dunk, 2002; Knezevic, 2009).

The current study builds from these bodies of literature but differs in key ways. Specifically, I begin from the premise that the spring bear hunt is neither socially nor economically necessary. Scholars across a number of disciplines have explored ways in which conflict, between humans and black bears, can be mitigated and prevented through public education, modifications to human behavior, and enforcement (e.g. Lewis et al., 2015; Can et al., 2014; Howe et al., 2014), and others propose that more oversight, documentation, and evaluation are needed to ensure effective and adaptive conflict management (Spencer et al., 2007). Critical social science analysts challenge us to situate

specific policies within a larger socioeconomic and historical system of power relations, however. These writers argue that colonial, governmental, corporate, and scientific interests guide conservation and wildlife management, and influence not only human-bear relations, but also relations between the state and its citizens (Wamsley, 1994; Harding, 2014; Luke, 2011; Mahoney & Jackson, 2013). Others problematize the de-individualization of wildlife under colonial management programs, as well as their anthropocentric notions of wildlife as commodities existing only for human needs (Kheel, 2008; Kemmerer, 2015; Plumwood, 2002).

While the spring bear hunts in Ontario have been studied to some degree, researchers have not considered nonviolent alternatives to current human-bear management strategies in Ontario, or sought to approach human-bear relations through a critical, intersectional lens that moves beyond anthropocentrism. I approach this challenge as an opportunity to create more peaceful relations within and across species. The following section details the history of bear management, including the spring bear hunt, and human-black bear relations in Ontario.

Prior to 1961, black bears were ruthlessly bounty-hunted, unprotected, and seen as a nuisance or “vermin species” in Ontario (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 257; Backgrounder, 2009, p. 1). This bounty hunting ended with the classification of black bears as a “managed game species under the *Game and Fish Act*” in 1961 (Backgrounder, 2009, p.1). Although the bounty hunting of black bears ended with this classification, their status as vermin was not challenged, and the killing of black bears merely became heavily regulated and normalized as a result (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 257). Once black bears became considered “big game species” in the province, various hunting and bear

management policies were introduced or modified. The baiting and use of hounds to hunt black bears were not eliminated, but became restricted (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 257). The spring bear hunt was cancelled and removed from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1999, largely due to a powerful campaign run by the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Shad Foundation (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 257). This campaign was rooted in concerns about baiting practices and the orphaning of black bear cubs (Dunk, 2002, p. 37; Lemelin, in Dunk).

In a more recent context, according to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNRF), black bears are valued as a resource in the province, and deemed an important “hunted big game species” (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2009, p. 1). The MNRF has also admitted the importance of black bear viewing for visiting tourists and residents in the province as well as their valued role in ecosystems. The bodies of black bears, also called “Mukadae-Makwa,” have been and continue to be used for food, clothing, medicine, ornaments, and for various other spiritual, commercial and recreational purposes, including viewing purposes (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 256-257). The MNRF states that the harvest of black bears must be carefully managed, as “black bear populations are vulnerable to over-harvest because they are a long-lived animal, reach sexual maturity relatively late in life, have a low reproductive rate that is physiologically dependent upon environmental conditions (food), and are most sensitive to changes in adult survival, particularly survival of adult females” (Backgrounder, 2009, p.1). The MNRF’s own scientific findings have shown that, contrary to their recent claims, human-bear conflicts are unlikely to be reduced by increased killing (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 259; Commito, 2015). This is the case because natural food source availability, not population

size, is the main cause of increased human encounters with bears (Commito, 2015). Furthermore, human-black bear interactions have been compounded in northern Ontario due to failing wild berry crops, improper disposal of waste and food conditioning, as well as other ecological impacts including “habitat fragmentation due to some forestry practices, anthropogenic expansion of human activities into new areas... and the high number of black bear cubs born into the late 1990s” (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 261-262).

The importance of educating the public in order to prevent conflict between humans and bears, as well as property damage, crop damage, and threats to human safety from black bears has been highlighted by the MNRF. Accordingly, following the initial cancellation of the hunt, the MNRF created a “Nuisance Bear Committee” in 2003 in order to examine interactions between humans and black bears. The launch of the Bear Wise Program quickly followed in 2004, and was meant to minimize conflict between humans and black bears through public education, prevention, reporting, and various responses to conflict (Lemelin, in Dunk, p. 259-260). Lemelin (in Dunk, 2010) argues that “heightened public awareness of controversies involving black bears, often sensationalized by the media” often led to over-reporting of bear sightings, also known as “bear-mania” (p. 260). Interestingly, the Bear Wise program found that “over 50 per cent of bear-human conflicts are the result of improperly stored garbage” and that few deaths from bear attacks have been reported in North America (Lemelin, in Dunk, 2010, p. 260). This discredits recent claims of a looming threat to public safety from black bears. Aside from safety concerns, northern Ontario purportedly suffered economically as a result of the moratorium, with some opponents even suggesting that it was harmful for the bear

population as well (p. 263). This study seeks to build from the former claim, probing for sustainable alternative economic endeavours that benefit all species.

The MNRF frames black bears as resources to be consumed by humans and does not address the sentience of black bears as individuals beyond their human use or broader population value. Yet puzzlingly, the Ministry has also acknowledged that black bears have notable “navigation skills, memory and intelligence” (Backgrounder, 2009, p. 2). This inconsistency in wildlife management has also been noted and problematized by Kim (2015). Still, despite its acknowledgment of their sentience, the MNRF decided to reintroduce the Ontario spring bear hunt beginning in 2013. The North American model of wildlife management has been problematized, and the use and meaning of “wildlife management” has varied over time and space, with colonial and positivistic roots. Buckley et al. (2003) defines it succinctly as referring “to deliberate manipulations of wild animals or their habitats to achieve conservation goals as ‘direct wildlife management’ ” (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003, p.182).

In policy and practice, wild animals are commonly dubbed “resources” by wildlife management agencies. This moral devaluation of other wild animals as individuals and species has been underlined by multiple scholars (Kim, 2015; Kheel, 2008). As Kim (2015) argues:

“A resource is a means to an end and never an end in itself. In Kantian terms, a resource lacks moral autonomy and intrinsic worth. A resource cannot be the source of moral claims. Note that a conflict of interests between wildlife and people is rendered logically impossible by this language because “resources” cannot be said to be in conflict with people... The term “resource” appears technical, neutral, and

apolitical, but applying it to wild animals is a profoundly political move that settles, at least provisionally, the moral status of the wild animal” (p. 144).

The current study is aligned with these works, and rejects any notion that other species are mere resources to be consumed and manipulated.

While wildlife management agencies are established and given power to manage, and some would argue, to protect other species, “what are being cared for and protected are not wild animals per say but rather wildlife ‘resources’ that fishermen and hunters wish to consume” (Kim, 2015, p. 145). In this way, “wild” animals are commodified through systems of wildlife management and are sold as mere resources to be controlled and disbursed. Indeed, Lemelin has problematized the positivistic paradigmatic roots of wildlife management, stating that “the master narrative of wildlife management implies that ‘common resources’ can only be managed through an expert-based, control-oriented, instrumentalist, and reductionistic approach” (Lemelin, as cited in Dunk, 2010, p.252). Moreover, contributions from other disciplines, particularly social sciences, and the voices of local communities, are filtered through this master narrative and often marginalized or dismissed altogether (p. 252). Accordingly, this study seeks to bridge these gaps and challenge wildlife management and associated narratives through sociological analysis, with the intention of dismantling hierarchal human-wildlife relations.

Relations between humans and black bears in the province often involve competition for other “game species” and “resources,” and an economic, political, and cultural conflict (Lemelin, as cited in Dunk, 2010, p. 251). Lemelin contends that, “while humans and predators have co-existed for millennia, the frequency of conflicts has grown

in recent decades, largely because of the exponential increase in human populations, habitat degradation, and the resultant expansions of human activity... into areas that were formerly relatively inaccessible” (Lemelin, as cited in Dunk, 2010, p. 251). Human-bear interactions are increasing in formerly inaccessible areas due to greater human access and shifts in patterns of recreation in these areas (Lemelin, in Dunk, 2010, p. 256). Hence, human-bear interactions have increased and will continue to do so. As Dunk (2002) argues, “killing more bears will not solve the problems that beset the rural and northern regions of Ontario” (p. 66). In light of this, the current study seeks to find alternatives to the spring bear hunt to benefit northern communities, both human and nonhuman, and to address concerns about increased human-bear interactions and conflict.

II. Gender and Political Economy in Ontario

Some sociological works also argue that conservation and management of black bears is inextricably connected to masculine identity, particularly working class masculinities, and is entangled with an economic dependence on bear hunting in Northern Ontario (e.g. Dunk, 2002; Lemelin, 2008). Indeed, a well-known Ontario historian, Mike Commito, has argued that the killing of black bears in Ontario is necessary and can be done sustainably for economic gain and to ensure bears remain for the needs of humans (Commito, Aug. 2015). The spring black bear hunt expansion is giving non-resident hunters the opportunity to access black bear hunting tags in Ontario again. This has been argued by the MNRF and the Ontario government to bring in additional revenue and an “economic boost for the tourism industry in Northern Ontario” (Petroni, 2015).

The economy in northern and more specifically, northwestern Ontario has been dependent on resource-based and extractive industries for decades. The majority of residents in northwestern Ontario are “employed in the primary industries such as forestry, fishing, hunting and trapping, and mining, in processing industries (which include such things as sawmills and pulp and paper mills), and in construction and transportation” (Dunk, 1991, p. 68). In an examination of human-black bear relations in Northwestern Ontario, Lemelin (as cited in Dunk, 2010) highlights the main challenges being faced in northern communities including “ongoing cycles of boom and bust,” “economic downturns and high energy prices,” and “declining forestry resources” (p. 249).

Additionally, Dunk (2010) has found that powerful hunting organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) and the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters (NOTO), have ties to powerful allies such as the MNRF, the Ontario government and, in the past, Ontario’s Conservative Party (p. 51). These hunting organizations now recognize culture as “a form of political capital” and are using this to recast “their own place in the social hierarchy as a cultural rather than a purely economic-political phenomenon” (p. 39). The political power and influence of hunting organizations and outfitters in Ontario is emphasized by Dunk (2010) as “Local, small-scale entrepreneurs sometimes align themselves with external corporate and state forces that control the region’s resources and economy, and sometimes they find their own interests juxtaposed to these powers” (p. 50). This is similar to the situation of working-class local communities, as they are heavily dependent on “a few large employers involved in resource extraction industries...” (Dunk, 2010, p. 51). The OFAH and other

powerful hunting organizations in the province, according to Dunk (2010), have even continuously and closely monitored and resisted “the extension of hunting and fishing rights of aboriginal people” in the province (p. 52). Their political lobbying power has repeatedly influenced successive provincial governments, which have amended and created legislation in order to appease these powerful hunting organizations, while often excluding the interests of First Nations in the province (Dunk, 2010).

Several other scholars have explored the connections between gender and hunting (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004; Kheel, 2008; Luke, 2007). Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt (2004) problematize the sexualisation of hunting discourse, including “narratives of traditional masculinity” that involve women, weapons, and other animals (p. 237). They demonstrate how hunting and wildlife management language is a patriarchal discourse, one that constructs the attitudes of hunters towards women, “hunted prey,” and nature in a way that “validate[s] and exacerbate[s] white male dominance and power” (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004, p. 239). They argue that the way in which hunting is culturally constructed takes place in a “symbolic system that values predation and dominance” and also “conjoins hunting and sex with women and animals” (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004, p. 239). Disturbing evidence of these connections between hunting, sex, weapons, women, and animals were discovered in their examination of hunting periodicals, for example (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004). Kalof, Fitzgerald, and Baralt (2004) contend that these sexualized narratives and representations are “resilient popular culture images that celebrate and glorify weapons, killing, and violence, laying the groundwork for the perpetuation of attitudes of domination, power, and control over others” (p. 247). Brian Luke’s book, “Brutal Manhood and the

Exploitation of Animals,” also argues that animal exploitation and constructions of manhood are connected, and explores why men support the domination and killing of other species through institutions such as hunting.

In Ontario specifically, Dunk (2010) argues that, “the arguments about the right to hunt that are being employed by organizations such as the OFAH and the NOTO must be seen within the context of this highly volatile discursive, political, and economic struggle over the meaning of masculinity” (p. 61). Thus, what is perceived to be at stake in conversations about the cancellation and reinstatement of the spring bear hunt, and the management of black bears in Ontario is the “image of the white male hunter” that hunting organizations are attempting to transform (Dunk, 2010, p. 61). Kheel (2008) contrasts the feminist concept of care-taking, including the practice of caring for individual nonhuman animals within ecosystems, with the masculinist concept of holism¹, which focuses on broader categories of species and biological communities while dismissing the individual. The “holist” attitudes associated with hunting, conservation, and wildlife management, she argues, are “masculinist in that they subordinate empathy and care for individual beings to a larger cognitive perspective or ‘whole’” (p. 3). Kheel (2008) argues that, amongst other characteristics, this philosophy is based on anthropocentrism and a “belief in the necessity of subordinating concern for individual other-than-humans to larger constructs” (p. 4). The “sacrificial mentality” of many hunters has been critiqued for they believe in the sanctioned “killing of ‘wild’ animals for the well-being of the larger ‘species’ or ‘the ecosystem’” (p. 5). Evidently,

¹ In contrast to ecofeminist and anthropological thought, the term holism, when applied to conservation and species management, is used by scholars to refer to masculinist thinking.

issues of masculinity and anthropocentrism intertwine, and are central to the focus of this study. A commitment to care, rather than domination of other animals as individuals, aligned with Kheel (2008) and Coulter (2016b), guides the current study.

III. Human-Bear Relations and Conflict

Humans continue to live in close proximity to bears and other species, and interspecies conflict is increasingly challenging to address with growing human populations and uneven development. Human-bear conflict remains under-examined within the social sciences, and this is troubling considering the need for more context-specific and intersectional examinations and solutions. Can et al. (2014) explains:

“By 2050, 87% of world’s population will be living in the developing world... Many will find themselves near populations of bears, making conflicts increasingly likely. Policy objectives of human-bear conflict management might differ from one locality to another depending on the species, the needs of people, priorities of wildlife agencies, and availability of various elements of the toolbox of conflict management. Whatever the policy objectives are, the reduction in bear conflicts, and indeed human-wildlife conflict more generally (Peyton 1994), will hinge on a holistic approach that is as sensitive to the needs of people as it is to those of bears. In areas where conflict is a threat to the viability of bears, there is a need for international conservation groups and institutions to promote and aid in conflict management, and for international institutions... to support governments and rural communities in conflict management” (p. 511).

Thus, multispecies conflict management is said to be crucial for fostering peaceful and nonviolent human-bear relations in light of the increasing frequency of encounters between species.

Human encroachment and expansion has had devastating impacts on bears. Indeed, Harding (2014) argues that “although in precolonial history... bears ranged far out onto the prairies, they have now become both discursively and geographically situated in remote mountain valleys. They are celebrated as denizens of the wilderness and at the same time are unwelcome in our towns and on our farms... Most of the time, these supposed animal “trespassers” are removed to a remote location. If they reoffend, however, they are typically destroyed” (p. 179). This literature effectively illuminates the banishment and violence endured by bears due to human encroachment and urbanization, and the need for more caring solutions and conflict management.

In addition, there are other economic reasons for the demonization of certain wild animal species, and the framing of bears as nuisances. Knight (2000) has assessed conflict between humans and wildlife, and found that “many claims of wildlife pestilence are inaccurate, exaggerated, or ill-founded... There are a number of reasons for the exaggeration of wildlife pestilence: because inefficient farmers seek to save face, because of a desire to maximize compensation or because of inflated perceptions of risk among marginal peoples” (p. 8). Bears are continuously situated as pawns in human conflicts due to the economic challenges and constraints, especially where farmers are concerned (p. 180). Bear hunting is limited and regulated, yet the killing of bears in defense of oneself or of property is permitted and even normalized across Canada (p. 179). Literature on the topic exposes the complexity of human-bear conflict, highlighting

themes of anthropocentrism and chiefly economic reasons for violent and reactionary bear management practices.

Several scholars highlight conflict as well as similarities between humans and bears, particularly black and brown bears. Similar to humans, and aligned with this study, Harding (2014) argues that the temperament of bears is found to vary on an individual basis. They are often quite tolerant of humans and not predatory in nature (p. 180). They are also similar in terms of their “fierce maternal devotion,” which is known as the most common reason for aggression in human-bear encounters, as well as their level of intelligence and curiosity (p. 180-181). As Harding (2014) points out, “much of bear behavior, like human behavior, is learned, and bear cubs stay tied to their mothers twice as long as other North American mammals of comparable size” (p. 180). Even the omnivorous diets of bears have been found to match that of human populations, including the historic diets of North America’s indigenous peoples, even prior to European colonization (p. 180). Most central to human-bear conflict in Canada, according to Harding (2014), is that “the majority of attacks in recent years, since the institution of bear-proof garbage and food storage policies in the Canadian national parks, have been the result of a bear put on the defensive” and surprised by humans (p. 181). Harding (2014) found that while the majority of bear encounters and conflict result from human error, this is not always the case, and conversations about human-bear conflict often reveal deep-rooted conflict between human locals and tourists, as well (p. 182).

Along with scholars who have illuminated shared characteristics between humans and bears, other scholarly works point to shortages in natural food availability for American black bears (also known as *Ursus Americanus*) as a cause of human-bear conflict and the

ineffectiveness of bear management. Obbard et al. (2014), for example, in an examination of food availability among black bears and human-bear conflict in Ontario, discovered that increased or larger “harvests” of bears do not prevent human-bear conflict. This is, they argue, because food shortages are increasingly common for bears and causing conflicts with humans, something that could only be addressed by maintaining bears “at low densities—an objective that might conflict with maintaining viable populations and providing opportunities for sport harvest” (p. 98). In other words, the killing of black bears will not reduce human-bear conflict, unless they are killed at “unsustainable” rates.

Obbard et al. (2014) also found that interactions between humans and black bears are inconsistently reported and public education programs initiated by management agencies to reduce human-bear conflict are difficult to measure for effectiveness (p. 99).

Moreover, although management agencies encourage the killing of bears for sport as a solution to human-bear conflict, “evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of harvest management for reducing HBC is lacking” (p. 99). Obbard et al. (2014) recommend the continued and expanded use of “food availability surveys” throughout Ontario in order to better inform black bear management (p. 107). This study goes further in arguing that black bear management should be informed by sociological research and attention to moral, ethical, and empathetic concerns that are presently disregarded. The current study aims to highlight these neglected concerns.

These recommendations are key, and of particular importance are the few works by scholars who have sought to reimagine and alter wildlife management, highlighting the need for education, reconciliation, and solidarity. Can, D’Cruze, Garwshelis, Beecham, and Macdonald (2014) argue that several considerations must be made through initiatives

focused on human-wildlife conflict management. First, they suggest that economic instruments need to be used to compensate communities and avoid the killing of bears in cases of human-bear conflict (Can et al., 2014, p. 508). This will “foster tolerance among local communities” and protect biodiversity (p. 508). Additionally, they state that “[f]inancial incentives should be tailored to individual situations, aligning the economic and cultural needs of people while delivering the desired conservation outcome” (p. 508). This essentially implies that the generalized and widespread use of the current North American model of wildlife management is outdated and ineffective. Further, it is even possible to “integrate poverty alleviation strategies together with human-bear conflict management to foster reconciliation between bears and people,” as they found in South America and Asia (p. 508).

Second, Can et al. (2014) posit that trust must be established between local communities and bear managers, particularly by encouraging those affected by human-bear conflict to get involved in the process of conflict management. This can be achieved by “establishing partnerships between managers, locals, and conservationists” (p. 508). The current study will differ slightly in calling for the inclusion of stakeholders who do not have a vested interest in the killing and use of bears in particular. Thirdly, attention needs to be paid to concern for bears as individuals, not merely as abstract populations. For example, North Americans are increasingly expecting wildlife management agencies to mediate human-bear conflicts using methods that are nonlethal (p. 509). Fourthly, educational initiatives (like Bear Wise) are key and must attempt to heighten public awareness and assist in preventing human-bear encounters, including injuries and damage (Ibid). This education must be targeted, dynamic, interactive, and continuously re-

evaluated for effectiveness. Finally, after reviewing fifty management plans for human-bear conflict, they conclude that plans must be “explicit about where, when, and under whose responsibility each action will be enacted” and “make clear the vision, goals, objectives, actions, outcomes, and outputs, and clearly specify the structures for institutional and personal responsibility” (p. 510-511). This literature is utilized in assessing alternative programs and drives the current study.

IV. Ecotourism and Bear/Wildlife Viewing

Ecotourism

Ecotourism has been explored extensively across disciplines, both as an industry and as a philosophical shift. The meaning of ecotourism is widely debated and has been for decades, varying according to time and geographical location. Thus, the significance of ecotourism and its meaning for this study will be illuminated in this section as it may be implemented and utilized as an economic and environmental remedy for many of the concerns detailed in the previous sections. According to scholars, ecotourism is a form of tourism that is nature-based (Beeton, 1998; Buckley, 2003; Fuller et al., 2007; McCool & Moisey, 2008), educative (Beeton, 1998; Fuller et al., 2007), and sustainably managed (Beeton, 1998; Fuller et al., 2007; McCool & Moisey, 2008). It can be argued that ecotourism and other forms of nature-based tourism can be differentiated by understanding that ecotourism is often more educational, beneficial for local communities, and associated with conservation initiatives (Beeton, 1998, p.3). In addition, ecotourism is often associated with protected areas, such as national parks, and “wilderness.” However, the notion of untouched wilderness is problematic as it disregards the impact of colonialism on the land and indigenous peoples. It is critical to

recognize that “the constructs of “undisturbed”, “pristine” and “wilderness” are generally Westernised notions that negate the fact that most areas used for ecotourism have been utilised and inhabited by indigenous peoples for thousands of years” (Buultjens, 2010, p. 500).

The consensus across scholarly literatures is that ecotourism, at the very least, involves travel to protected areas, or less developed and scenic locations, as well as an education experience with and appreciation of nature (Buckley, 2003, p. 224; Fuller et al., 2007, p. 142; Buultjens et al., 2010, p. 500; Honey, 1999, p. 25; McCool et al., 2008, p. 38; Burkhardt et al., 2005, p. 4; Beeton, 1998; Buckley, 2003;). For the purpose of this study, and in recognition that a broad and diverse range of ecotourism programs, policies, and activities exist, the most appropriate and exhaustive conceptualization of ecotourism for the current study is as follows:

“Refers to economically viable, culturally appropriate, nature-based tourism activities that promote education, interpretation, environmental protection, conservation and involvement of local communities. Ecotourism features low impact activities, environmental and cultural appreciation and sensitivity. It often focuses on the educational aspect of an experience and relies heavily on the responsible use of the natural resources in the area. In many cases, ecotourism offers a combination of adventure, cultural and natural history features”

(Burkhardt, Boan, & Read, 2005, p. 4).

A similarly concise, yet exhaustive and intersectional definition that I have found representative of the diverse kinds of ecotourism studied here was coined by Martha Honey in 1999. She argues that “ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine, and usually

protected areas that strives to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights” (Honey, 1999, p. 25).

Although ecotourism has been explored extensively for decades, some confusion still exists concerning the origins of ecotourism, and the difference between ecotourism and other forms of tourism (Weaver, 2001). A large majority of the literature on ecotourism appears to have been written over a decade ago. Given the immense change that can occur within the tourism industry in less than a decade, some of this information may be outdated, in addition to being largely anthropocentric. More sociological and intersectional examinations of ecotourism, with attention paid to colonization and power dynamics involved, are desperately needed. Nevertheless, there are many variations of ecotourism which exist based on the individual, organization, government body, or country employing the term, and this is further complicated by a lack of oversight and consistency (Weaver, 2001). According to a report prepared for Ontario’s Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and specific to the province, ecotourism is “purposeful travel that creates an understanding of cultural and natural history, while safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and producing economic benefits that encourage preservation. Ecotourism implies a scientific, aesthetic, or philosophical approach with a high level of interpretation” (“Ontario Resource-Based...,” 2002, p. 134). It is crucial to acknowledge these many different definitions, and the importance of interpretation, as the current study recognizes that there is no monolithic blueprint for successful or meaningful ecotourism.

Although ecotourism involves many context-specific components, many of which are detailed in the previous paragraphs, an examination of the literature on each specific component of ecotourism is beyond the capacity of this review. However, the importance of its educational and interpretive qualities of ecotourism must be emphasized, as it is crucial for the transformation of relations between humans and other animals, as well as the environment more generally. As will be seen in the Results and Evaluation chapter and according to key informants, industry experts have shown that interpretive guides play a key role in creating a strong conservation ethic and respect for local communities as well as other species of both plants and animals. This study focuses on the ecotourism activity of bear viewing in particular.

Other scholars recognize diverse subsets within the ecotourism industry that set themselves apart from well-known forms of ecotourism. As a subset within the broader industry of ecotourism, the existence of “indigenous ecotourism” has been explored. Indigenous ecotourism is considered an “activity and enterprise focused on maintaining the natural and cultural integrity of the land and people where it is developed” (Nepal, 2004, p. 174). This form of ecotourism is distinctive in that it departs from commercialized and eco-centric definitions of ecotourism, and it is important for the current study. Indigenous ecotourism prioritizes both the environment and the wellbeing of indigenous communities, with less of a focus on economic and tourist incentives. The cultural element is acknowledged in many definitions, but recognition of the importance of low cultural impacts in ecotourism is especially essential for indigenous communities (Fuller, Caldicott & Cairncross, 2007, p. 142).

Furthermore, indigenous ecotourism, although under-examined empirically, is intended to empower and strengthen indigenous communities. This empowerment is found to be achieved through indigenous ownership, which is defined as “an activity and enterprise focused on maintaining the natural and cultural integrity of the land and people where it is developed [and] a viable economic activity” (Nepal, 2005, p. 112). Indeed, this is seen in the Great Bear Rainforest, which is discussed in subsequent chapters. As stated by Nepal (in Ryan & Aicken, 2005), “the development of ecotourism is seen as integral to this process toward indigenous control, self-reliance, and improvement of social and economic conditions” (p. 113). For example, in northern British Columbia ecotourism may indeed revive stagnant economies as long as plans for ecotourism “adequately consider the needs, aspirations and values of indigenous communities, and protection of natural resources” (Nepal in Ryan & Aicken, 2005, p. 113). Similar to the study of other forms of ecotourism, though, scholars tend to neglect the diverse experience of other animals as individuals within different forms of ecotourism. Thus, the current study and analysis of ecotourism case studies pays attention to not only the impact of ecotourism on indigenous communities, but the roles and experiences of other animals as individuals in all forms of ecotourism will be included as well. Attention is also paid to the potential for empowerment through indigenous owned and operated ecotourism.

In addition to the importance of differentiating subsets of ecotourism, there is also continued debate and less certainty among scholars, tourists, and industry experts about specific features of ecotourism including the consumptive nature of ecotourism, its sustainability, and the contributions of accreditation programs. Firstly, tourist activities

that are deemed “non-consumptive” are said to offer experiences, while “consumptive” activities are said to offer “tangible products” (Weaver, 2001, p. 80-81). More specifically, “activities such as hunting and fishing (except perhaps for ‘catch and release’ fishing) are commonly identified as being consumptive, while ecotourism-related activities such as birdwatching are usually perceived as experiential, and hence non-consumptive” (Weaver, 2001, p. 81).

For the purpose of this study, and in recognition that this dichotomous approach may lack merit, I agree with scholars who have proposed that these two kinds of activity fall on a continuum, “and that all activities actually incorporate elements of both” (Weaver, 2001, p. 81). Even ecotourism experiences, according to Weaver (2001) involve various kinds of consumption (see list on p. 81). Irrespective, Weaver (2001) argues that “ecotourism, which is only a relatively small proportion of all tourism, is primarily non-consumptive, but is extended over into the consumptive side to recognize these consumptive aspects as well. However, it does not extend as far into this side as the same territory occupied by hunting or fishing” (p. 82). The current study is attentive to the varying context-specific levels of consumption and exploitation that can be involved in ecotourism, and concedes that this is not dichotomous.

At the same time, understanding the spectrum of consumption involved in ecotourism helps us to set it apart from other forms of tourism. Ecotourism is often confused with, but in fact very different from what is known as “resource-based tourism.” This form of tourism is “based on using and enjoying the natural environment and resources on Crown lands and waters. Resource-based tourists hunt, fish, visit provincial parks and conservation reserves, camp, canoe, hike, snowmobile, view wildlife and

plants, and enjoy other similar outdoor activities” (“Resource-based Tourism,” 2016). It also differs slightly as it emphasizes recreation and consumption over education and preservation, and includes hunting and fishing. It has been argued that ecotourism involves, or should involve only “non-consumptive” activities compared to other forms of tourism and industry (Font & Tribe, 1999; Boyd & Butler, 1999, p. 128; Hall & Boyd, 2005, p. 23). Wildlife watching, which is of particular interest for this study, has been argued to be a form of non-consumptive wildlife tourism (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003). For the purpose of this study-it is recognized that hunting is undoubtedly consumptive. I also acknowledge that indigenous ecotourism varies on this consumptive spectrum, and may depart from westernised notions of non-consumptive ecotourism. Indeed, consumptive and non-consumptive activities often exist alongside each other and exist on a continuum.

Along with its consumptive nature, there is also some disagreement amongst scholars about the sustainability of ecotourism, and its reputation as a fool-proof or faultless form of tourism. Ecotourism has been argued to be a subset or example of sustainable tourism (Boyd & Butler, 1999; Buckley, 2003; “Review of the Latest...,” 2017), which “is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems” (“Ontario Resource-Based...,” 2002, p. 134). However, ecotourism and sustainable tourism are often falsely equated, revealing that “confusion over the meaning of sustainable tourism has been compounded in some countries by use of the term ‘ecotourism’ as meaning the same as ‘sustainable tourism’”. Ecotourism does indeed embrace the principles of

sustainability, but it refers explicitly to a product niche... The development of ecotourism can provide a useful tool within wider strategies towards more sustainable tourism..."

(United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization, 2005, p. 12).

Like with any form of tourism, the exploitation of human and nonhuman animals as well as the natural environment is possible within ecotourism.

Related to questions of sustainability in ecotourism, issues of greenwashing and leakage are increasingly being problematized in scholarly literature. A limited number of works and organizations have highlighted the issues of "green washing" (Honey, 2008; LePree, 2008-2009), with more attention being paid to "leakage" (Honey, 2008; Koens & Dieperink, 2009; LePree, 2008-2009) which plague ecotourism, showing that it can in fact be as harmful and as capitalist in nature as other forms of tourism. Greenwashing occurs when a tourist organization or business falsely uses the ecotourist label or title, often to draw in the business of naïve ecotourists, when recognition is not deserved or their practices do not align with that of ecotourism (LePree, 2008-2009, p. 60). Honey (2008) calls this "ecotourism lite" when "scores of companies can be found on the internet offering these high-priced tours, which do nothing for conservation or local economic development..." (p 70). Greenwashing becomes a concern "when poorly planned, unregulated, and overhyped, ecotourism lite, like mass tourism or even traditional nature tourism, can bring only marginal financial benefits but serious environmental and social consequences" (p. 69). The phenomenon of "leakage" has also been highlighted, and occurs when the revenue generated from tourism in the host country are flowing out or never entering it in the first place (Honey, 2008, p. 107). This is of great concern, as communities considering the implementation of ecotourism

programs, or shifting from other industries to tourism in general, need to be guaranteed economic incentives and stability.

Wildlife Viewing

Of central importance for the current study is the ecotourist activity of bear viewing, or more broadly, “wildlife viewing” and its impacts on human and nonhuman animals. Ecotourist activities, accommodations, and business types vary greatly based on the landscape, as well as other context-specific factors. The numerous types of ecotourist accommodations and activities will not be examined in great length here, as it is beyond the scope of the current study. Beeton (1998), however, has compiled a comprehensive list of accommodation types for reference (p. 4-5). Beeton (1998) also provides several examples of ecotourism activities, including “sightseeing, bushwalking, camping, wild flower viewing, bird watching, wildlife viewing, night walks, special interest scientific tours... and adventure based tours such as cross-country skiing, white water rafting, and mountaineering” (p. 5). This is an extremely small and incomplete list, however. A broad range of ecotourist activities exist, varying based on geographical location, seasonal limitations, and innumerable other factors. Although the broad and vast array of ecotourist activities are recognised, this study will focus on the activity of “wildlife viewing,” and in particular bear viewing, which are detailed below.

Most relevant to this study, and often a subcategory or element of ecotourism, is “wildlife tourism.” The current study examines “wildlife viewing,” an ecotourist activity which is essentially the viewing of nonhuman animals in their natural habitat while engaging in their everyday behavior. Wildlife watching (not to be confused with “wildlife tourism” itself, an entire industry of its own and which viewing is a part) has been found

by scholars, and government bodies to be in high demand among ecotourists (Higginbottom, 2004). This form of tourism involves a focus on the experience of passively observing non-domesticated, wild animals by visitors (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003). Accordingly, it is crucial for the success of viewing and the wellbeing of other animals that this form of tourism has a positive, or at the very least, neutral effect on them. A wide and diverse variation of wildlife watching experiences exist within ecotourism. However, I would argue that the only acceptable forms are ones that seek to minimize impacts on other animals as individuals, species, and entire ecosystems. Buckley et al. (2003) have made remarkable contributions to these discussions in proposing that, “rather than restraining, attracting or habituating wildlife or taking advantage of natural constraints on their ability to run away, perhaps the lowest-impact way for tourists to watch wildlife is to do so without the animals being aware of the tourists’ presence. While in some cases this can be achieved by careful stalking, generally with an expert naturalist guide, more commonly it involves hides, remote cameras or similar devices” (Buckley, 2003, p. 232). While these suggestions are valuable, there are situations in which, with proper management, an awareness of human presence is not harmful to other animals who are being viewed. This will be elucidated more in the Results and Evaluation chapter.

Higginbottom, Tribe, and Booth (in Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003, Chapter 17) suggest that tourists can be educated and made aware in order to avoid risks to other animals through ecotourism and the guided viewing of other animals. Moreover, educating ecotourists about human-wildlife relations can potentially change attitudes and behaviour towards the environment and other species of animals, increase donations and

funding for research and conservation, and place increased pressure on governments to address conservation issues (Higginbottom, 2004). In this way, educational and accurate interpretation through the viewing of bears and other species can in some cases improve the behavior and attitudes of ecotourists in favor of conservation (Higginbottom, 2004, p. 112-116; Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003).

Furthermore, successful wildlife tourism has been found to increase the potential for positive relations between humans, the protection of habitat, and coexistence (Higginbottom, 2004). Wildlife watching is purported to provide incentive for land protection, and has even deterred hunting, thus boosting the protection of wild animals and their habitats (Buckley et al., 2003). As Buckley et al., (2003) explain:

“The key strength in relation to conservation potential that is particular to wildlife watching is the economic incentive that this can create for the conservation of natural environments. Such links could be strengthened by wider quantification and publicizing of the financial benefits derived from protected areas and from an increase in government support to private landowners considering implementation of nature-based tourism” (p. 191).

Evidently, there is potential for education and increased conservation values as a result of wildlife viewing. Interestingly, wildlife management practices have also been altered by increased wildlife watching and decreased hunting (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003, p. 189). Thus, wildlife watching may perhaps transform human-wildlife relations in cases where attention is paid to conservation, education, and proper interpretation. This is of central importance when considering the success and limitations of bear viewing programs and other policy alternatives.

The viewing of black bears is one form of wildlife watching that is of particular importance to this study and has largely been neglected by scholarly work in comparison to brown bear and grizzly bear viewing. Here, it is important to note the difference between brown bears and grizzly bears. Put plainly, “all grizzlies are brown bears, but not all brown bears are grizzlies. The grizzly is a North American subspecies of brown bear.... The correct scientific name for a grizzly is “brown bear,” but only coastal bears in Alaska and Canada are generally referred to as such, while inland and Arctic bears and those found in the lower 48 States are called grizzly bears” (“Brown bear fact...,” 2012). Some scholars, such as Debruyn and Smith, have examined benefits of wildlife watching for conservation, and the transformation of human relations with wildlife through viewing, with bears being of particular interest (in Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7). Recreational viewing of other animals became a formalized pastime in North America when Yellowstone national park was first created (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 51). Coinciding with the creation of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, bear viewing interest among North American wildlife watchers and ecotourists has increased dramatically since the 1980s, and it continues to grow (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 51). Bear viewing programs and tours in particular have been found to offer a means of enhancing educational tourist experiences (Needham, Rollins, & Wood, 2004). Benefits commonly cited are opportunities to view bears who are free-ranging, learning about the behavior and biology of bears, and learning to co-exist with bears in non-threatening and conflict-free settings (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 59).

Furthermore, bear viewing and ecotourism has even been argued to reduce infanticide amongst grizzly bears “as male bears tend to be more scared of human

activity” (Norden, 2013, p. 22). In addition, Debruyn and Smith have found that the most successful bear-viewing programs are ones that prioritize the movement and wellbeing of bears, provide informative interpretation, have well-trained and long-term staff, and that are managed in a ways that involve “local communities and incorporates native peoples and cultures” (Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7, p. 113). Furthermore, bear hunting and bear viewing are said to be incompatible, and cannot exist in the same location (Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7, p. 121). Debruyn and Smith have also written a useful and extensive guide for proper, low-impact, and context-specific bear-viewing program management (Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7, p. 119-120).

Other scholarly works problematize the perceived notion of “pristine wilderness” tied to ecotourism and bear viewing experiences. Some argue that these areas perceived to be untouched “wilderness” are at the same time industrial centers with changing value both socially and economically (Nevin et al., 2014). The perceptions, expectations, and presence of these tourists also impact the conservation of various species in these supposed “wilderness” areas (Nevin et al., 2014). Bears, for example, are argued to have low tolerance to disturbances, which requires bear viewing programs and businesses to remain small in size, and limit the number of viewers to reduce human crowding and ensure a continued presence of bears (Nevin et al., 2014).

The profitability and value of commercial bear viewing programs, particularly of grizzlies, has been highlighted by BC Parks and Nevin et al. (2014). It has been argued that bear viewing as an industry can potentially contribute and exceed the fiscal value of other industries, such as forestry and hunting (Nevin et al., 2014). In addition, a “pristine wilderness” area is not required for the success of bear viewing, though, as tourists have

been found to flock to view bears even in less than natural settings (Nevin et al., 2014). It is the bears themselves who the ecotourist values, as bear viewing can operate in “both pristine and modified/managed landscapes” (Nevin et al., 2014, p. 219). Going further, Nevin, Swain, & Convery (2014) argue that “bears create place by acting as the signifiers of wilderness” (p. 219). Fundamentally, this is promising for northern Ontario or locales that have yet to establish bear viewing, as the quality of the landscape is not near as important as the presence of the bears themselves.

In addition, there is widespread consensus that wildlife viewing and hunting are not compatible, and often in competition and conflict with one another (Buckley, 2004, p. 218; Higginbottom, 2004). For Ontario specifically, the somewhat non-consumptive nature of ecotourism is seen as incompatible and in conflict with more consumptive industries and products, such as hunting, fishing, and forestry which have been prioritized over all else in the province (Hall & Boyd, 2005, p.25). While most scholars champion ecotourism undoubtedly for its non-consumptive leanings, scholars such as Hall & Boyd (2003) have recognized that ecotourism, and even wildlife viewing, can operate on the same harmful level as other exploitive tourism businesses and extractive industries. Therefore, the current study takes into account that ecotourism programs are not fool-proof, and often come in conflict with other powerful and less environmentally-friendly industries. Unless executed impeccably, ecotourism and bear viewing programs on their own may not be able to address injustice or transform relations between humans and other animals, or the environment more broadly.

The benefits of properly planned and regulated ecotourism and viewing programs are nevertheless clear. However, not as much research exists on the impact that

ecotourism has on other animals, aside from their role as watchable wildlife. Buckley's (2004) comprehensive examination of ecotourism's impact on terrestrial wildlife is of great importance here. Ecotourism has been found to result in negative impacts on wild nonhuman animals through habitat modification, psychological disturbance and behavioral changes, impacts on sources of food and water, spreading of disease and even death as a result of vehicle collisions and the killing of "problem" animals for tourism purposes (Buckley, 2004; Higginbottom, 2004). In addition, the touching and feeding of wild animals should not be permitted, as many forms of wildlife tourism do, as it can cause a risk to their safety and an unhealthy dependence on human food sources (Higginbottom, 2004). The current study aligns with scholars who are strongly opposed to exploitative and captive forms of wildlife viewing and ecotourism.

Similarly, scholars like Green & Giese establish that tourist operators and tourists have been found to often remove, harm, or kill various species in the name of human safety and comfort (Higginbottom, 2004, Chapter 5, p. 90-91). They find that tactics used to avoid human-wildlife conflict range from the deliberate killing of species seen as undesirable or dangerous, damage to ecosystems and habitats through heavy use of insecticides and drainage of swampy areas, introducing exotic diseases to wildlife, to unintentional vehicle collisions with wildlife resulting in "road kill" (Higginbottom, 2004, Chapter 5, p. 91). Green & Giese determine that:

"The seriousness of the effect of and tourism activity on wildlife can clearly vary from mild discomfort or inconvenience to local or even global extinction of a species, or disruption of communities and ecosystems, and it is not always easy to determine where a particular effect is likely to lie along this spectrum. Effects can

be immediate and obvious... [Or] they can be subtle as to avoid notice even though such effects have the potential to lead to serious outcomes. Even relatively minor stresses, if experienced often enough, or experienced at key time of an animal's life cycle, may cause needless distress and influence the survival and reproduction of individual animals, with potential implications for breeding groups and populations" (Higginbottom, 2004, p. 92).

Obviously, these risks are greatly elevated in the case of endangered or threatened species of other animals. This demonstrates that, when poorly managed, ecotourism can and does often harm rather than protect other animals and their habitats.

In conclusion, there are clear gaps in the literature. Literature on ecotourism and bear viewing is strikingly anthropocentric; the experience of individual animals and is almost completely absent from these works. Much of the literature on these topics is also outdated, and few studies take the impacts of climate change into consideration when discussing the prospects of ecotourism and wildlife viewing. As a result, more research is needed to improve our understanding of the experiences of other species, the impacts of these programs, and potential alternatives. Moreover, little is known about the role and diverse experiences of women and people of colour in these bear viewing programs as well.

Very few works on ecotourism seek to understand the experience of other animals, or the perspectives of marginalized groups, particularly indigenous peoples (Honey, 2008), involved in ecotourism programs. It can be argued that more research and scholarly exploration of indigenous owned and operated ecotourism, including its potential and limitations through a decolonial lens, are needed. In relation to this neglect,

an examination of the resistance and activism in support of and against ecotourism would be useful for understanding the diverse experiences and perspectives of marginalized “others”. In addition, the worsening effects of climate change must also be considered in discussions about ecotourism, as well as ways that ecotourism and renewable energy may be coupled to lessen climate and species impacts. Unfortunately, much of what is written on wildlife tourism and wildlife watching appears to be anthropocentric or overly scientific, and fails to acknowledge and detail other animals’ sentience, agency, and individuality. More sociological research is needed on the viewing of black bears specifically. Scholarly works on the topic arguably erase difference by examining the viewing of “wildlife” generally, rather than recognizing difference within and across species. As is evident in exploring these scholarly works, ecotourism cannot be seen as a magical solution to environmental, social, political, and/or economic issues (Honey, 2008). A broader societal and ideological change must be made in order to transform relations with the environment and other animals.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This study interweaves intersectional and decolonial theories with new theoretical lenses from critical animal studies, particularly “engaged theory” and the idea of “interspecies solidarity.” These critical theoretical lenses are used to assist in the assessment of the data collected and to guide this project. The following sections detail the purpose of this multifaceted theoretical approach to exploring bear viewing, ecotourism, and interspecies conflict.

I. Critical Animal Studies & Engaged Theory

Of central importance to my study is “engaged theory.” As Taylor and Twine argue, “engaged theory” is central to the interdisciplinary field of critical animal studies, and it is driven by a commitment to both study and promote social change rather than abstract theory (2014, p. 6). My commitment to highlighting and challenging multispecies social injustice is crucial. Furthermore, “engaged theory takes an intersectional approach to power, practice and experience” and is relevant in building an understanding of human-animal relations and allowing for practices and “normative concepts” to be scrutinized (Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 6-7). This theory requires me to engage deeply with critical literature on nature and wildlife and to link scholarship with proposed action and multispecies solutions in solidarity with nonhuman animals. Essentially, Critical Animal Studies (CAS) holds that this theory “allows an interrogation of the human domination of other species situated in an understanding of the – geographical and historical- context of human practices” (Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 7). This theory drives the current study as I assess interspecies relations and bear viewing programs in various geographical and political contexts.

II. Ecofeminist Theory and Interspecies Solidarity

In combination with engaged theory and decolonial theory, this study is conceptualized through the lens of interspecies solidarity and solidarity with nature. Ecofeminist Val Plumwood's (2000) conception of "nature solidarity" affirms "both continuity and difference between humans and nature" and involves a process of forging solidarity with others in all of their difference, including the otherness of wilderness (p. 199-200). She posits that nature and nonhumans are interconnected with the human self, but are also separate beings with their own agency and purpose (p. 201). A "critical solidarity with nature" can only be achieved by "understanding that certain human societies position humans as oppressors of non-human nature, treating humans as a privileged group which defines the non-human in terms of roles that closely parallel our own roles as recipients of oppression within human dominance orders" (p. 204).

Additionally, Coulter (2016a) extends these ideas and develops "interspecies solidarity" as a lens through which to conceptualize different ideas, practices, and political visions. She argues that the concept is "not a monolithic blueprint to be singularly imposed on all working lives or political projects. Rather, it is an invitation... a path and the outline of a destination that encourages new ways of thinking and acting, individually and collectively, that are informed by empathy, support, dignity, and respect. Its precise meaning and applicability will vary across time and space, and be shaped by the particular participants and contexts" (Coulter 2016a, p. 153). This multispecies theoretical lens allows me to place myself with, and in support of other animals deemed "wildlife" and nature, as well as other humans.

Ecofeminists argue that human-centred ideas of rationality and isolation from nature permeate all aspects of relations between human and nonhuman animals. This is exemplified by Plumwood (2002), as she argues that, “rationalist constructions of human-centeredness and their associated ethical and epistemic exclusions and illusions have in the modern age helped western culture and the economic rationality of capitalism achieve its positions of dominance, by maximising the class of other beings that are available as ‘resources’ for exploitation without constraint” (p. 100). Plumwood (2002) argues that by resisting anthropocentrism and embracing “counter-centric ethics” we can focus on both human and nonhuman animals’ concerns as meaningful and equally as important in choosing our actions and representations (p. 124).

Similarly, ecofeminist scholar Marti Kheel (2008) problematizes the de-individualizing of nonhuman wild animals. As noted above, she argues that ecocentric and “holist” philosophies place emphasis on ecosystems, species, and other larger constructs of nonhuman animals over individual beings (p. 2). Kheel (2008) argues that moral consideration of nature is shaped largely by masculine cognitive perspectives and notions of autonomy, universality, and rationality, and “these attitudes are masculinist in that they subordinate empathy and care for individual beings to a larger cognitive perspective or whole” (p. 3). A characteristic of this masculinist perspective of nature is anthropocentrism, or human-centeredness that subordinates “concern for individual other-than-humans to larger constructs” (p.4). These masculinist and anthropocentric notions of nature essentially devalue and subordinate individual nonhuman animals, and they are seen as functioning as “sacrificial victims who suffer and die for the purported benefit” of human animals (p.5). Kheel (2008) maintains that gender influences moral

thought and conduct. She advocates for caring and empathetic relations with other species to challenge destructive masculine practices and notions of nature, and suggests in its place an “ecofeminist ethical orientation toward nature” (p. 207). This influential ecofeminist work guides this project and my analysis.

Aligned with ecofeminist ways of thinking about human-wildlife conflict, Corbett (2006) also argues that historically, “ethics were defined in terms of man” and this has led to the condemnation of animals who fail to live according to human principles (p. 183). In particular, predatory species have been framed as evil and devilish beasts through master narratives, formed largely through white settler notions of competition for resources. These master narratives led to a “full-scale war against predators” in the United States, including ruthless bounty hunting and lucrative markets for the bodies of predatory species (p. 184-185). This is also relevant to Ontario’s relations with black bears, as they were bounty hunted for several decades before hunting seasons were enforced, and are now hunted for economic gain (Commuto, 2015). Furthermore, Freeman et al. (2011) argues that nonhuman animals vary in their individuality, and thus “reductionist and normative generalizing” based on single incidents of conflict lack accuracy and mislead the public (p. 595). I examine case studies guided by this knowledge, and in recognizing that the exploitation and domination of nature and other animals is connected to the widespread marginalization and oppression of people of color, the poor, and indigenous peoples (Nhanenge, 2011).

III. Decolonial Theory

Given the particulars of this study, decolonial theory is also important, as dominant approaches to wildlife conservation are inseparable from past and present

colonialism. Decolonial thought holds that colonialism must be dismantled and challenged to achieve justice and empowerment of indigenous peoples, and this can be reoriented to address animality, as well. Belcourt (2015) argues that “we cannot address animal oppression...without naming and subsequently dismantling settler colonialism and white supremacy as political machinations that require the simultaneous exploitation and/or erasure of animal and indigenous bodies” (p.1). Decolonial theory thus challenges me to address and disrupt the colonial nature of wildlife management in Ontario.

In addition, other decolonial scholars have begun to challenge the Eurocentric, westernised, and colonial nature of tourism knowledge. Tourism scholars are urged by decolonial theory to consider other epistemologies and ways that tourism can exist without privileging Western knowledge and ways of knowing. The creation of collaborative projects and forging of new “cross cultural partnerships with, between, and among indigenous researchers and allied others” has been emphasized by decolonial thought (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015, p. 6). Of particular note is the work of Chambers & Buzinde (2015). Importantly, they argue the following:

“Despite the mentioned advances in tourism research and scholarship our knowledge about tourism is still predominantly ‘colonial’. By saying that tourism knowledge is colonial what is meant is that in tourism there is still a privileging of Western epistemologies. The concept of Western epistemologies, simply put, refers to those knowledges which have been produced in, and disseminated by the former colonial powers (predominantly in Europe). These ethnocentric knowledges became universalised through a complex web of exploitative power relationships and systems which were necessary to sustain colonialism. Western

epistemologies thus serve to foreground Western culture while concomitantly negating and denying legitimacy to the knowledges and cosmologies of those in and from the South (i.e., the former colonised territories). It is this dismissal of other ways of knowing that provided the fundamental logic which informed the colonial project and which ignored the systems of knowledge built over centuries by for instance indigenous groups such as the Mayans. In the context of tourism the colonality of tourism knowledge means that the peoples from and in the South, where much international tourism takes place and where many of its impacts are felt, are still largely the objects of tourism research rather than the producers of tourism knowledge” (p. 3).

Thus, this study seeks to address these concerns, and it calls for action and examines case studies through a decolonial lens where possible.

Chapter 4: Methodological Approach

In order to effectively answer my research questions, I have enlisted two main research methods: a) policy analysis, and b) semi-structured interviews. I began by surveying both the scholarly literature on alternatives and fields of practice to identify alternative strategies that are being used or that have been proposed. This exploratory approach has allowed me to see a broad cross-section of possibilities, while paying particular attention to ecotourism as it has good potential to be an alternative to current violent human-bear relations and management strategies that can generate income for different groups of people.

First, I consider bear viewing programs as an alternative to the spring bear hunt and a subset within ecotourism, specifically those taking place at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary, and bear viewing within the Great Bear Rainforest. Next I briefly assess the potential benefits of ecotourism and guide certification. Thirdly, I study the recent agreement developed for the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia. I narrowed my focus to these cases as my assessment determined that they have the most potential given the particulars of Ontario's cultures, geography, and political economy. I then collected further detailed policy data on these strategies and conducted targeted interviews with key informants involved in the programs' success and implementation.

I. Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA)

Along with semi-structured interviews, I engaged in an Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) of the selected ecotourism policies. Intersectional theory holds that human experiences, lives, social locations and categorizations are dynamic and

interacting parts of larger “mutually constituting social processes and structures which... are shaped by power and influenced by both time and space” (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 4). Moreover, forms of oppression based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and, I would argue, species are intertwined, not isolated (Hankivsky, 2014). Similarly, Deckha (2008) contends that species status and difference also help determine individual experiences and identities and interlocks with other forms of oppression and injustice. Thus, I am prompted to recognize differences and hierarchies, as well as similarities and interconnections.

Accordingly, IBPA is applied in order to illuminate the impacts of, and ecotourist alternatives to conventional wildlife management policy. It can be used to identify “who is benefiting and who is excluded” from wildlife conservation and to unpack management policy “goals, priorities and related resource allocation” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 4). The IBPA framework is flexible and “intended to capture and respond to multi-level interacting social locations, forces, factors, and power structures that shape and influence human [and, I would argue, nonhuman] life and health” and to reveal how policy constructs power (Hankivsky et al. 2014, p. 4).

This framework, “1) provides an innovative structure for critical policy analysis; 2) captures the different dimensions of policy contexts including history, politics, everyday lived experiences, diverse knowledges and intersecting social locations; and 3) generates transformative insights, knowledge, policy solutions and actions...” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 4). Specifically, the IBPA framework encompasses “a set of guiding principles and a list of 12 overarching questions,” split into either descriptive or transformative categories, guaranteeing that the current study remains “consistent with an

intersectionality-informed analysis” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 5). The descriptive questions assisted me in revealing contextual background information, underpinning assumptions, institutional priorities, targeted populations, and the privileges and inequalities created by policies (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 6). The transformative set of questions, on the other hand, assisted me in identifying solutions and alternatives to reduce inequalities socially and structurally. Notably, this framework is anthropocentric; I have extended it to consider the experiences of nonhuman animals who are impacted by the policy assessed herein, particularly black bears.

Employing this intersectional paradigm in a critical policy analysis allows me to promote “social justice and equity” for bears and humans, to recognize that identities, both human and nonhuman, are “constructed, and dynamic,” and that power is crucial (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 4). Because this study involves conflict between bears and humans, as well as between humans themselves based on race, class, and gender, it is important to look at multiple categories of relationships, interactions, and identity. Aligned with intersectionality, I seek to inspire a “conceptual shift in how researchers, civil society...and policy actors understand social [and species] categories, their relationships and interactions” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 5). This framework combined with my theoretical framework allows me to assess these policies using “diverse sources of information and knowledges” from both academic literature and institutional and policy documents (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 6-7). Furthermore, it permits the current study to “generate new perspectives and insights” about wildlife management policy issues and the populations impacted by them, both human and nonhuman (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 7).

This framework assists me in the identification and assessment of promising alternatives to bear management policy in Ontario. Specifically, there are several of the “Descriptive” and “Transformative” questions that I utilize continuously in order to guide my analysis of program alternatives in combination with the theoretical lenses detailed in Chapter 3. The “Descriptive” questions from one through four are used in my Introduction chapter in order to explain my positionality in relation to this policy analysis, to set the context for the “policy ‘problem’ under consideration,” to explain how representations of this problem have arisen, and the groups impacted and involved in “this representation of the ‘problem’” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 39). The fifth “Descriptive” question of the IBPA is used repeatedly, especially in my Results chapter to ask, “What are the current policy responses to the ‘problem’?” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 40). This overarching question helps me to probe collected data to understand what the bear viewing and environmental policies I examine are trying to achieve, how they “address, maintain or create inequities between different groups,” and if they “create competition for resources and political attention among differently situated groups” (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 40). These questions are also answered throughout using various lenses from my theoretical framework where appropriate or possible.

In addition, five out of the seven “Transformative” questions are utilized in combination with my theoretical framework to assess each program and policy in my Results chapter as well. These questions assist me in exposing existing inequities and ways they can be reduced, needed interventions and improvements, short-term and long-term policy solutions, and how these programs have and can be implemented elsewhere (Hankivsky et al., 2014, p. 40-41). The questions are crucial for identifying and assessing

the alternative programs and policy alternatives to the spring bear hunt for Ontario. They also allow me to focus on impacts of these policy alternatives, and the potential for social justice and equitable solutions to human-bear conflict and multispecies concerns.

II. Interviews

In order to better understand the transition and complexities involved in implementing alternatives, I have also conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants who have been organizational leaders and experts involved with the development and implementation of the programs selected. Three industry experts were interviewed: John Hechtel, Jamie Hahn, and Brian Falconer. John Hechtel is a bear expert and biologist with twenty-five years of experience who formerly worked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge (MRSGS). Jamie Hahn currently owns and operates the Khutzeymateen Wilderness Lodge and previously worked for BC Parks as a protected areas manager in the Khutzeymateen. Brian Falconer is an outfitter, guide, and Raincoast Conservation Foundation's coordinator working out of Victoria, BC. I also attempted to interview an indigenous participant, Douglas Neasloss, about bear viewing and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. Unfortunately he was unavailable for an interview at the time. These interviews were conducted over Skype, with the number of interviewees initially being dependent on the quantity of appropriate alternatives discovered, and the willingness of experts to share their knowledge. These interviews have allowed me to probe and better understand the successes of alternative programs, and to attempt to resolve our ongoing related challenges in northern Ontario. This method reflects

sociology's interest in the perspectives of social actors involved in the processes being studied, and recognizes patterns of structure and agency.

Throughout my research and interview process, I have incorporated ethics through reflexivity, and ensured that I cause no physical, emotional, or cultural harm to participants and communities involved. Ethical issues in the interview process or my research in general were not foreseen or apparent, as I interviewed targeted experts and organizational leaders, who were contacted through their organizations and websites. Nonetheless, I made use of Andrea Doucet's (2008) work on reflexivity and relational knowing as a guide for reflexivity and ethics in my sampling and interviewing process. Conceptually, I employ an abductive research design. In engaging in an interpretive process, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's (2012) hermeneutic circle is helpful for sense-making and understanding. It begins with my current understanding and spirals towards better understanding through my exploration of the literature and my experiences with analyzing policy.

An interpretive research design and iterative process required that I pay extra attention to context and surprising or puzzling occurrences throughout my content and policy analysis and I found it useful to document them in my field notes. I remained open to the possibility of surprises and anomalies, and refrained from rushing to conclusions in fear of inhibiting possibility for analysis. For this reason, formulating a working argument prior to analysis was objectionable and even constraining. By using abduction to theorize anomalies that arise, I was able to generate new connections, concepts, accounts and explanations (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). In other words, I began from an intellectual and ethical interest in identifying alternatives to the current spring

bear hunt model and anticipated that ecotourism, among other strategies like the GBRA, would offer areas of possibility. Specifics and more detailed insights, such as the success of bear viewing programs, were then induced from the data.

Chapter 5: Results and Evaluation

I. Bear Viewing Programs

a. The McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge

In order to determine the relevance of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge (hereafter shortened to MRSGS) bear viewing program as a model for northern Ontario, I collected data from a range of scholarly sources, government publications and websites, as well as the few existing, yet outdated scholarly assessments of the MRSGS. The MRSGS offers an impressive viewing program, explicitly renowned for guided brown bear viewing. Although this viewing program is unique to its geographical location and based on a specific population of Alaskan brown bears, there are valuable lessons and management strategies to be taken from the study of the MRSGS. There is limited data and scholarly work on MRSGS bear viewing and management within the last decade, and even less from the social sciences. Still, there are several limitations of the program that could be induced from the data that does exist. Also, John Hechtel, a retired bear biologist with the ADFG, shared his knowledge in order to illuminate the many strengths, limitations, and valuable lessons that stem from the MRSGS.

Program Background

McNeil River is located high in a mountainous region of southwestern Alaska, and is known as a hub for one of the world's largest concentrations of brown bears. MRSGS was officially designated by the Alaska State Legislature for the protection of these brown bears in 1967, with the area being further enlarged in 1993 (Alaska

Department of Fish and Game, 2017f). According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG):

“The sanctuary protects about 200 square miles of wildlife habitat and is located approximately 250 air miles (400 kilometers) southwest of Anchorage and 100 air miles (160 kilometers) west of Homer. In addition to brown bears and salmon, red fox, arctic ground squirrels, harbor seals and bald eagles are commonly observed. Other wildlife that may be observed in the sanctuary includes moose, caribou, wolves, wolverine, various furbearers, waterfowl, sea ducks and sea birds. McNeil River and nearby Mikfik Creek drain into Kamishak Bay in the shadow of Augustine Island, an active volcano. This is a roadless area with no modern amenities and it is virtually undisturbed by human development” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017f).

The highest number of bears purported to have been observed at the MRSGS at one time is seventy-four, with the greatest concentrations of brown bears being seen during late July’s salmon run (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017i). This high number of individual brown bears present in one location has led to the unique success and renowned reputation of the MRSGS.

The viewing of brown bears at the MRSGS has been regulated and managed using the same permit system since its inception. Interestingly, when it was first designated, bear viewing was quite uncommon and frowned upon in Alaska. This may be a sign of hope for northern Ontario, which is at a similar stage in human-bear relations and conflict. Indeed, John Hechtel claims that “in 1967, there really wasn’t very much in the way of thought given to watchable wildlife, bear viewing... it was really early on in

the whole process, especially for a fish and game department to institute such a thing” (personal communication, November 17, 2016). In order to view brown bears and other animals at the MRSGS, visitors are required to enter a lottery for a limited number of viewing permits. The ADFG allows a maximum of ten permit holders to view brown bears in the sanctuary each day. These visitors are educated and guided by experienced ADFG naturalists. Permit holders visit the sanctuary for four days between June and August, arriving by chartered aircraft, camping nearby, and hiking to designated bear viewing areas with ADFG guides. According to the ADFG and John Hechtel (personal communication, November 17, 2016), there have been no injuries or fatalities between the bears and humans at the MRSGS, and conflict has been effectively avoided. This may be attributable to the prioritization of the brown bears wellbeing and comfort over that of human visitors, and the sanctuary’s strong stance on the compatibility of human activities with their management goals (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017f).

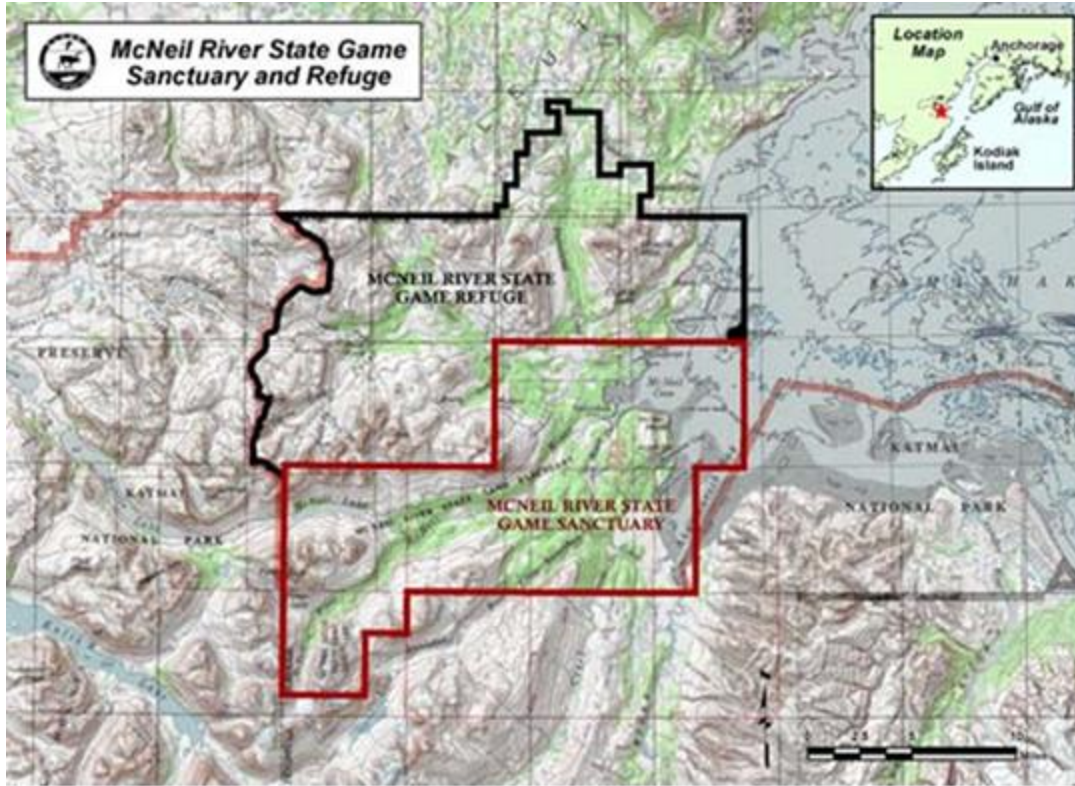


Figure 1: A recent map showing the boundaries between and around the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge (“McNeil River Boundary...,” 2016).

Program Strengths

The strong points of the MRSGS are unmistakable. First, the ADFG appears to operate the program in a way that recognizes multispecies concerns, as they openly state that no trapping and hunting is permitted within the sanctuary (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017h). The goals set forth by the ADFG, and the regulations for the sanctuary are intended to “to protect the bears, their habitat and the unique visitor experience” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017h). Although brown bears are protected inasmuch as their presence is preserved for viewing purposes within the MRSGS, the “legal hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife watching, hiking, boating, snow machining, and camping” of other animals is permitted within the refuge, which exists

alongside the sanctuary (see Figure 1) (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017h). It is unfortunate that the ADFG still present brown bears and other “wildlife” within the park as resources to be consumed, if not visually through guided viewing, then also literally and violently through hunting and fishing.

In addition, the ADFG advertises that the MRSGS “is open to most public uses provided the activity does not damage refuge resources, disturb wildlife or disrupt existing public uses” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017h). It is unclear why, if they openly renounce the disturbance and disruption of other animals, that the ADFG permits hunting and fishing in the MRSGS. This recreational focus, fraught with anthropocentrism, appears to be a recent development at the MRSGS. Indeed, John Hechtel states that “McNeil was originally set aside to protect the concentration of bears at the falls, not as a primarily recreational opportunity to observe or photograph bears” (personal communication, November 17, 2016). There was a clear need to protect these bears from the public. Specifically, Hechtel explains that the designation was made as a result of people “trying to look at bears at the time, they were creating chaos, they were chasing bears around, they were carrying guns, and sometimes there were a few bears shot “ (personal communication, November 17, 2016). Thus, this bear viewing program and the designation of the MRSGS emerged out of a concern for the wellbeing and need to conserve brown bears within the area. Although the MRSGS was not created for the purpose of viewing and recreation, its continued success can be attributed to these newer program components. While still problematic, the MRSGS was created for the purpose of protecting a specific population of bears from humans, and has done so successfully within the park.

Second, and one of the fundamental strengths of the MRSGS is its impeccable record of safety and conflict management between humans and brown bears. The expert guides have knowledge and experience with most of the individual bears being viewed at the MRSGS, which has allowed them to gauge appropriate interactions and to avoid conflict with individual bears who are less trusting of human presence (Fair, 2006). This success is also due to the emphasis placed on education and interpretation before, during, and after bear viewing takes place at the MRSGS. Upon arriving at MRSGS, all visitors are given an informative orientation session in which they are educated on “(1) appropriate behavior around bears, and (2) rules concerning garbage and food” (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 58). Supervision of visitors is mandatory inland near the viewing areas, and where they are not supervised, they are strictly limited spatially and equipped with information regarding how to react if they are to encounter a bear while unaccompanied by staff (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 58). Also, human visitation has been carefully studied and limited at the MRSGS in order to preserve habitat and limit disturbance and negative impacts on other animals within the sanctuary, which is an important element of successful low-impact viewing according to Nevin et al., (2014).

While the ADFG designated the MRSGS with the goal of conserving brown bear populations and has prevented conflict within the park, it is interesting to note that conflict between hunting and viewing of brown bears continues to exist in the surrounding areas. For example, Fair (2006) has argued that the Alaska Board of Game and other groups have threatened the MRSGS, and “the numbers of bears killed by hunters in the nearby Katmai Preserve and other areas surrounding McNeil—areas where McNeil bears are known to travel in the off-season—has increased 500 percent. An

annual average of nine bears were taken in the early 1960s, but that has jumped to 54 since 1998” (Fair, 2006). John Hechtel also confirmed that there has been conflict between bear viewing and hunting communities over the MRSGS, with many who wish to challenge the ban on brown bear hunting within it and who still view the bears as a nuisance (Hechtel, J. Nov. 17, 2016).

This conflict has recently worsened with the election of Donald Trump as US president. As of April 3, 2017, bear and wolf cubs are no longer afforded protections from hunting and other cruel methods of killing in Alaska’s refuges. According to the White House, Donald Trump recently signed “H.J.Res. 69, which nullifies the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service's final rule relating to non-subsistence takings of wildlife on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska” (“The White House..,” 2017, April 3). It is unclear at this time how the MRSGS and the bears who rely upon it for safety will be impacted by this cruel law.

Nevertheless, although brown and black bears and other animals are not afforded complete freedom and protection throughout Alaska and even within the park, the existence of this MRSGS is still significant and important for their protection, the education of humans, and the preservation of habitat. The limitations alluded to here will be expanded upon in the following section

Program Limitations

While there are notable strengths evident from the data, several weaknesses and limitations also became apparent in the study of the MRSGS. Firstly, this viewing program and ecotourism activity is exclusive and largely inaccessible both geographically and monetarily. The sanctuary can only be reached by chartered seaplane, and is a

hundred miles from the nearest town. Visitors must purchase a chartered flight (paid for separately), hike in, and camp nearby according to strict guidelines in addition to the expense of their viewing permits (Fair, 2006). Consequently, John Hechtel laments that this has limited the MRSGS success:

“There are a lot of people who don’t want to have to spend a week and a fair amount of money to get to a fairly remote spot to spend four days looking at lots of bears, they just want to see a bear or two in the wild for a little bit of time. On one extreme you’ve got McNeil, which is a huge commitment as far as applying in advance and cost to get there and the fact that you have to camp and cook your own food the whole time...” (Personal communication, November 17, 2016).

Indeed there are both application fees and user fees. A non-refundable fee of \$25 must be paid for each person seeking to attend. In addition, “the user fees for Guided Viewing Access Permits are \$150.00 for Alaska residents, and \$350.00 for non-Alaska residents. The user fees for Camp-Standby Viewing Access Permits are \$75.00 for Alaska residents and \$175.00 for non-Alaska residents” (“McNeil River State...,” 2017, p. 2). This policy, with all expenses combined, essentially makes their services inaccessible visitors and ecotourists from other locales who have lower socioeconomic status.

At the same time, the ADFG openly claim to conduct “all programs and activities free from discrimination on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability” and urge any applicant who has been discriminated against to contact them (“McNeil River State...,” 2017, p. 2). The ADFG’s specific protocols for addressing complaints of discrimination are unknown, however. Essentially, they claim to conduct the lottery and application process in an

equitable manner. While this is notable and important, there are large segments of the population who likely cannot afford its viewing permits and the cost of transportation and thus cannot apply to begin with. In addition, ecotourists with disabilities and other accessibility concerns likely would not be able to visit the MRSGS. Although rough terrain and remoteness are common and often unavoidable features of bear viewing programs, it may be within the power of the MRSGS to make its viewing permits and user fees more affordable through grants and other initiatives. On the other hand, this is a common feature of bear viewing and ensures low visitor numbers and high standards of protection and conservation for bears and their habitat.

Secondly, the transformative potential of the MRSGS for human-bear and human-wildlife relations in general is limited. Interestingly, the brown bears passing through the MRSGS experience both protection within the park, and danger surrounding it. In other words, these bears “experience both power and oppression in varying context and at varying times” (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 35-36). Specifically, when inside the designated sanctuary and refuge, brown bears are privileged in that they are protected from hunting and trapping. At the same time, the oppression of brown bears outside of those boundaries, and other animals within *and* outside of the MRSGS has gone unchallenged. Although brown bears within the MRSGS are safe from hunting and have their individuality respected within its boundaries, once they leave the designated area they do not have the same protections or respect from humans.

In addition, the ADFG regulates the killing of individual black bears and grizzlies outside of the MRSGS, while claiming to have their best interests in mind. For example, the ADFG requires hunters to “Bring the hide and skinned out skull to ADF&G or a

registered sealer to be examined and sealed. A small tooth (a premolar) will be pulled to obtain age information on your bear. At the time of sealing please make sure the skull is not frozen solid so the tooth can be pulled. If you are interested in learning how old your bear is, call our office in late winter and we can tell you. We will need your name, date of kill, and location of the kill” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017b). Even more disturbingly, the ADFG’s website stipulates that “Hunters must leave evidence of sex (penis sheath or vulva) attached to a black or brown/grizzly hide until the hide has been sealed. This is a legal requirement. This information is used in bear research and management” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017b). These disconcerting protocols have an uncanny resemblance to other wildlife management agency practices, such as those problematized by Kim (2015).

Most recently, there have also been measures taken by the United States House of Representatives to remove rules against the “killing of black bear cubs and their mothers at their dens in Alaska’s national wildlife refuges” (Gentile, February 16, 2017). Unsurprisingly, this legalization has been pushed for and supported by Safari Club International and the National Rifle Association, again demonstrating the notorious power and influence of hunting organizations. According to a recent CBC article: “Geoff Haskett, former Alaska regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said the agency adopted the rule for Alaska refuges after repeatedly fending off state attempts to extend predator control in direct conflict with refuge purposes. Some attempts end up in court. For two years, he said, the state authorized an overharvest by hunters of grizzly bears on the Kenai Peninsula” (Joling, April 4, 2017). Brown bear biologists and the ADFG have been resisting the unrestrained and cruel killing being pressed for by the

state, however Donald Trump threatens the safety of wildlife in refuges with his recent signing of “resolution approved by the U.S. House and Senate to revoke a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rule banning most predator control on Alaska refuges” (Joling, April 4, 2017). Evidently, black bears and other animals deemed predators are given far less consideration, respect and protections than grizzly bears in Alaska, although both are disadvantaged under the ADFG’s current policy and procedures.

Along with insufficient protections for other animals, the ADFG and their guides at the MRSGS have the power to determine the fate and purpose of each individual brown bear within and outside of the MRSGS, and their interests are driven by various social, economic, and political factors. The MRSGS is owned and operated by the State of Alaska and a limited number of ADFG employees, and thus does not benefit local communities or private businesses as much as other bear viewing programs. Managers of the sanctuary are employed by the ADFG, often carrying with them a specific worldview and status. Larry Aumiller, for example, who was manager of the sanctuary for thirty years, has claimed in previous interviews that bears are knowable and “predictable,” revealing the positivism for which wildlife management is known (Fair, 2006).

Further, visitors are permitted by the ADFG to bring their own firearms into the sanctuary, and although under five percent do so, the level of safety of bear viewing for both humans and the bears themselves becomes unclear (Aumiller et al., 1994, p. 58). John Hechtel also notes that within the MRSGS, visitors “always have someone who knows bear behavior, and somebody with a gun to accompany the group” for safety purposes (personal communication, November 17, 2016). However, this raises questions about who is held responsible for conflict with and disturbance of bears at the MRSGS,

and who pays the price for human-bear conflict if it does occur in the sanctuary.

Evidently, the same protocols exist within the sanctuary for addressing human-bear conflict as they do outside of it; while precautions are taken, if a bear is perceived as aggressive and approaches humans, shooting and killing them, while unlikely, is still a potential outcome.

Thirdly, the sustainability and longevity of success for this specific model of bear viewing is unpredictable, even more so than other bear viewing programs. Not only are protections for other animals within Alaska's wildlife refuges being threatened, but changing climate and ecosystems also threaten the MRSGS and the species who live within it. The demand for viewing bears and other species has grown and is continuing to grow globally (Aumiller & Matt, 1994), though the number of individual brown bears frequenting the MRSGS has fluctuated according to the success of salmon runs. John Hechtel explained that the success of bear viewing at MRSGS has always been dependent on the return of salmon runs, which are often threatened by industrial fishing and the killing of bycatch. He argues that, "when the salmon numbers were low, the bear numbers dropped significantly and the bears spent less time at McNeil than they would in other years. Over time the salmon numbers have started to come back and the bear numbers rebounded as well. There are other factors that influence it... the impacts of ocean acidification and temperature changes on the survival of salmon" (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). These impacts threaten the existence and success of the MRSGS.

In addition, while demand for bear viewing grows, it is largely made up of visitors who want convenience and affordability, which has resultantly decreased the

number of applicants for responsibly managed bear viewing at places like the MRSGS. John Hechtel has found that in surrounding areas, “bear viewing opportunities opened up that were less controlled, and you didn’t have to plan so far in advance...” and as a result, “the pressure on McNeil has dropped off” (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). An influx of other, more accessible bear viewing programs could ultimately lead to a decline in the success and effectiveness of the MRSGS. This will likely have a negative impact on the bears who are being viewed in other less regulated viewing programs.

In addition to uncertainty as a result of ADFG ownership and increased bear viewing, external threats to the sanctuary and the wellbeing of the brown bears who reside there are evident. Negative impacts due to development, extractive industry, and environmental disasters are evident. For example, John Hechtel found that “The Exxon Valdez spilled in Prince William Sound but some of the oil came around and hit a bit of the Katmai coast. It never got quite up to where McNeil is, but there is always the risk of that sort of thing. There is a large mine being proposed, the Pebble Mine, which is north of where McNeil is in the Illiana area” which could threaten bears and other species on the coast (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). It is clear that the strengths of the MRSGS may also depreciate with Donald Trump’s presidency, as he and hunting organizations have already begun to successfully dismantle protections for other animals in Alaska.

Important Lessons

Although these limitations are unsettling, there are also valuable lessons that have been learned in the creation and operation of the MRSGS bear viewing program. Firstly,

the MRSGS has shown that the habituation of brown bears is, and can be considered a positive phenomenon. The coexistence of humans and bears within the MRSGS for decades undoubtedly flies in the face of wildlife management agencies and their rhetoric (even that of the ADFG, oddly enough); particularly arguments claiming that bear habituation and all interaction between humans and bears are dangerous. As John Hechtel explains, “Habituation is that neutral state of indifference toward human activity” (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). Food conditioning, which leads to an abnormal reliance upon human food sources, is prevented and avoided at the MRSGS. John Hechtel argues that this stance is rooted in the knowledge that “access to human food and garbage is one of the worst things that can happen to bears... and probably one of the biggest sources of human-bear conflict is access to human food and garbage, chickens...” (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). Hechtel also emphasizes that, contrary to popular belief and that put forward by wildlife management agencies, habituation is in fact a positive phenomenon, and is separate from dependence on human food sources (personal communication, November 17, 2016).

The current study has revealed that habituation can be considered an asset and necessary part of bear viewing at the MRSGS. Certainly, the success of the MRSGS depends on and can be attributed to the habituation of brown bears to human presence devoid of food conditioning (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 57). Aumiller and Matt(1994) have stated that at the MRSGS, “most of the actions we took to encourage more bear use also encouraged habituation,” while the behavior of human visitors has been carefully managed by staff (p.55). Thus, preventing human-bear *relations* is not an objective at the

MRSGS. On the contrary, managing human behavior, rather than that of individual bears, has proven to be an effective means of preventing human-bear *conflict* at the MRSGS.

As Aumiller and Matt (1994) found through managing the MRSGS, and others have found through extensive research and observation, the safest and most mutually-beneficial way to view brown bears at the falls involved multiple strategies. First, the MRSGS ensured that all interactions between humans and brown bears within the MRSGS were as consistent and predictable as possible in order to allow each bear to choose whether or not to be near and viewed by humans on a daily basis (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 55). This approach, including maintaining a calm demeanour around each bear and adapting based on observations of stress. This could be considered unreliable, however, as the behavior of each individual bear is unpredictable. There is no way to ensure the same response in every scenario, or to know how they are feeling, their personalities, or comfort levels. Second, a strategy of “nonapproach” was maintained over the years, which seeks to avoid causing each bear stress or discomfort, and involves allowing each bear “to choose their proximity to humans” when viewers are present (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 55). Third, routes used by guides and their viewing groups were carefully planned out as to avoid being in close proximity or blocking the bear’s access to food sources, and a safe distance from each bear was maintained at all times (Aumiller & Matt, 1994, p. 55-56). These strategies and lessons could inform the establishment of a similar program to be implemented in northern Ontario.

Ultimately, the MRSGS demonstrates the importance of limiting the number and movement of human visitors as it ensures successful and low-impact bear viewing. Indeed, as Aumiller (1994) states, “the objectives of bear protection, quality viewing, and

safety were compatible” at the MRSGS, and still are today (p. 55). Clearly, this is an exemplary model despite its limitations, and could be imitated by incorporating these strategies and specific components in other locales.

Conclusion

It can be argued that the state is the sole beneficiary of the MRSGS, while those of lower socioeconomic status outside of Alaska and in surrounding communities are largely excluded from its bear viewing program and the accompanying benefits. The MRSGS is governed by the ADFG, is owned and operated by the State of Alaska, and its policy reflects this. The rules and regulations of the sanctuary are based on the interests of the ADFG, a department of the government of Alaska. The ADFG’s purpose is to “work to foster the highest standards of scientific integrity and promote innovative sustainable fish and wildlife management programs to optimize public uses and economic benefits. From making policy and management decisions to providing education and outreach programs, interacting with and involving the public is vital to our mission and goals” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017a). As a wildlife management agency, they subscribe to and create policy aligned with the North American model of wildlife management; a model that largely excludes diverse knowledges of nature and human relations with other species (Mahoney & Jackson, 2013).

Furthermore, while this anthropocentric and colonial power-dynamic is alleged to afford brown bears within the sanctuary safety and freedom of movement, it denies other animals the right to live dignified and free lives at the same time. Brown bears in Alaska experience both advantage and repression simultaneously; as discussed earlier, within the sanctuary they are admired and protected, but outside of the sanctuary and refuge they

face trapping, hunting, and other threats from human activity. According to the ADFG, “Alaska has an estimated 30,000 brown bears statewide. In 2007, about 1,900 brown bears were *harvested* [my emphasis] in Alaska. Of that figure, about 700 were taken by Alaska residents and roughly 1,200 (or 67 percent) were taken by nonresidents. Bear hunting seasons are held in both spring and fall in some areas but only in fall in other areas. It is illegal to kill cubs and females with offspring” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017e). These violent power dynamics between the state, brown bears, and hunters persist despite the success and nonviolent elements of the MRSGS. Violence perpetrated against brown bears, black bears and other animals has gone virtually unchallenged by the existence of MRSGS.

Similar to Ontario’s MNRF, the ADFG regulates both consumptive and non-consumptive resource-related activities. Specifically, the ADFG’s Division of Wildlife Conservation provides training and education to hunters, regulates wildlife viewing, conducts research, enforces species protections, and oversees “Special Areas” (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017c). According to their website, the ADFG:

“Manages 32 state wildlife refuges, critical habitat areas and wildlife sanctuaries known as special areas. These include popular and well-used places such as the Mendenhall Wetlands in Juneau, Potter Marsh in Anchorage, Creamer’s Field in Fairbanks, the McNeil River and Pack Creek bear viewing areas and more remote areas such as Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary. DWC also engages in hunter education and training, and operates three shooting ranges. A variety of other education and outreach efforts include education programs to minimize human-wildlife conflicts, teaming with teachers and schools for science education, and

providing information to Alaska's thousands of visitors, many of whom come to hunt and many others who come to view wildlife. The department also partners with other groups such as the Alaska Outdoor Heritage Foundation to offer outdoors skills clinics such as Becoming an Outdoors Woman" (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017c).

While the ADFG does emphasize education and public awareness, and selectively protects specific animal species, they ultimately perpetuate anthropocentric practices and normalize the consumption of other species as resources, rather than recognizing them as sentient individuals with interests of their own. In addition to these masculinist and anthropocentric characteristics, it is also clear that women's involvement and participation with the ADFG is minimal, as all of the expert contacts I could find were men. In addition, they have merely created a separate women's program: "The Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) Program offers hands-on workshops that teach adult women outdoor skills while building their confidence and ability to get out and safely enjoy all that Alaska has to offer" (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017d).

This gendering is also apparent in the ADFG's subordination of caring and concern for other animals as sentient individuals. For example, the ADFG's hunting clinics include topics such as "Bear Baiting Clinics, Steel Shot, Sheep/Bear Hunting", while they are charged with protecting brown bears within MRSGS at the same time (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017d). In an instructional video provided on the ADFG website, called the "Take a Closer Look - Brown Bear Identification Video," they even refer to brown bears being hunted as "trophy males and females", and explain how to hunt for "trophy males" using objectifying language (Alaska Department of Fish and

Game, 2017g). The ADFG also instructs hunters on how to skin a brown bear's dead carcass, remove their flesh, and explains protocols requiring hunters to deliver "both the hide and skull of a grizzly bear killed" (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2017b). The lack of empathy and care for other animals is evident and disturbing within the ADFG, as has been found repeatedly in other wildlife management agencies as well (Kim, 2015).

In addition, the existing policies of the MRSGS appear to maintain and even worsen conflict between various groups in some cases; namely, between hunters from local communities, ecotourists and wildlife viewers, and the state. This may be a result of the exclusivity of the MRSGS, a lack of benefit for local communities, and unaddressed anthropocentrism within the state. Disagreements over the "ownership" and control of brown bears as resources persist. For example, John Hechtel argued that this conflict between hunters and bear viewing "has happened around McNeil, where there have been fights around hunting nearby" (J. Hechtel, personal communication, November 17, 2016). This may be a result of the hypocrisy and contradicting actions of the ADFG which claims to protect, and yet sanctions the killing of other animals simultaneously. The ADFG is after all, a wildlife management agency, which prompts concerns about their ability or interest in promoting equity between humans and other animals. Furthermore, can a colonial government agency that is invested in the death and exploitation of other species be trusted with the task of transforming human-bear relations? How can a department of the Alaskan government responsible for so much interspecies violence and anthropocentrism, claim to have the best interests of other animals, including bears, in mind?

Thus, for this program to be loosely imitated and implemented in other settings, such as northern Ontario, there are several notable alterations that would need to be made. Primarily, the program could be owned and operated by local communities, possibly in conjunction with animal advocacy and environmental organizations, rather than the state. However, this colonial management program would likely not be welcomed in northern Ontario, not only by hunters and outfitters, but by indigenous communities as well. National and provincial parks already exist, and have resulted in the erasure of indigenous peoples from the land in Canada. Northern Ontario has colonial wildlife management agencies of its own that need to be dismantled and restructured. If we are to challenge colonialism, and to empower local communities, we must give them the tools and resources necessary to operate such a program themselves if they so choose. A realistic starting point would be to establish collaborative partnerships between First Nations governments, communities, and the province of Ontario. Secondly, it would need to be accompanied by a broader education program devoid of the anthropocentric, colonial, and masculinist underpinnings of ADFG and the North American model of wildlife management. We must reject these foundations and in doing so transform relations among and between species.

Thirdly, the MRSGS's regulatory model, including rules for limiting visitors, emphasizing training and the use of experienced guides could be incorporated into a bear viewing program in northern Ontario. As detailed earlier, limiting the impact of human activity on each bear, and the number of viewers at any given time is crucial. Also, having experienced and knowledgeable guides with the capacity to educate visitors on interspecies relations and the land may have a transformative impact on human-bear

relations. Conducting research on the specific nonhuman animal species to be viewed, and the impact of viewing on individual animals in northern Ontario would be key. Experts to be used as guides need not be wildlife management experts as they are with the MRSGS, but could also be naturalists, wildlife ethnographers, including women and men with traditional knowledge of, and experience interacting with these species or bear viewing elsewhere. In order to foster interspecies solidarity, it is essential that a similar bear viewing model to the MRSGS be created without the influence of those who have a vested interest in the exploitation of other animals and the land.

b. The Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary and Refuge

Similar to the MRSGS, the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary is renowned as home to Canada's largest concentration of grizzly bears and impressive opportunities for successful bear viewing. In combination with grizzly bear viewing, the KGBS may also provide opportunities for cultural and natural education as well as activities of a traditional nature. This boat-based viewing program has numerous strengths and few limitations. As a model for northern Ontario, this program highlights key lessons and essential features of bear viewing. Similar to the other programs examined, and arguably even more so, this program is under-examined and limited data is available about its impacts on local communities, as well as who benefits and is disadvantaged by its accompanying policy. These features and concerns are below.

Background

Established in 1994, the Khutzeymateen (or K'tzim-a-deen) Grizzly Bear Sanctuary (hereafter the KGBS) is a "land and marine sanctuary" located on British Columbia's north coast, surrounded by "rugged peaks towering to 2100 metres above a

valley of wetlands, old growth temperate rainforests and a large river estuary” (BC Parks, n.d.) The KGBS park area covers nearly 45,000 hectares of land. It is the first park of its kind in Canada preserved for the purpose of protecting grizzly bears and their habitat, and it is also home to an abundance of other animals (BC Parks, n.d.). The KGBS was expanded in 2008 with the establishment of the Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy (see Figure 2 below), part of a grouping of protected areas designated to improve the protection of grizzly bears in the area (BC Parks, n.d.). This grouping also includes the Khutzeymateen Park (also known as the sanctuary) and the Khutzeymateen Inlet West Conservancy (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 1). The specific role of Khutzeymateen’s grouping of protected areas “is to continue to provide Grizzly Bear viewing and other wilderness-based recreation opportunities which do not significantly impact the conservation of Grizzly Bears and their habitats” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 16).

This bear viewing program is unique in that grizzly bears cannot be hunted in the KGBS and have purportedly never been hunted by the Gitsi’is as they “believe that the soul of a person that dies may reincarnate into the Me’deek (Grizzly Bear)” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 12). Simultaneously, both recreational and commercial fishing, hunting, and trapping of other species do take place within and around the Khutzeymateen, though they are heavily regulated and limited by the province.

In assessing data from policy documents and government websites, it is clear that the KGBS demonstrates multiple strengths, limitations, important lessons about bear viewing, and elements that may well be implemented in northern Ontario. Jamie Hahn, a

previous protected areas manager with BC Parks and current bear viewing lodge owner and guide in the KGBS, also provided important insights through our interview. This bear viewing program has achieved the successful protection of grizzly bears and their habitat, purported respect for and empowerment of First Nations communities and protection of their cultural values, an educational and interpretive emphasis, and a collaborative management plan. While these are significant contributions, the limitations include limited accessibility due to its remote location and cost for bear viewing, the low number of employment opportunities, as well as seasonality and regulatory issues. Nevertheless, this bear viewing program provides a strong model for other locales seeking joint ventures between environmental ministries, and provincial and First Nations governments.

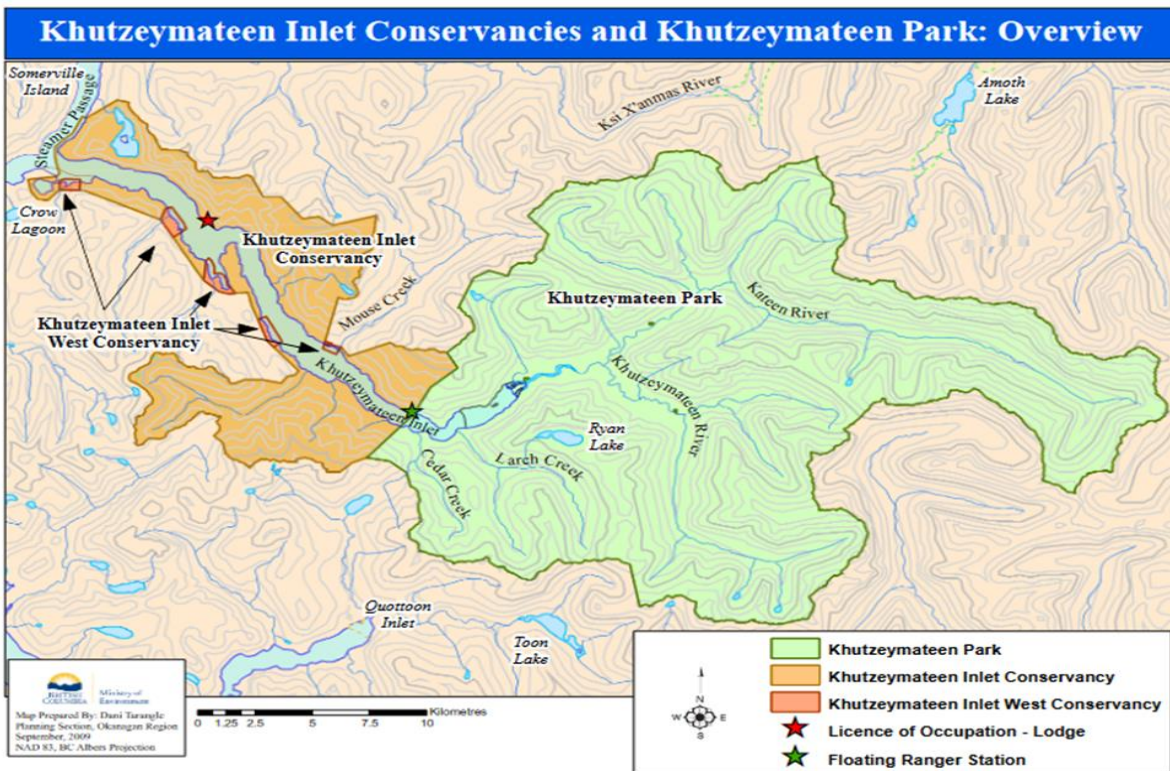


Figure 2: A detailed map of the KGBS and surrounding conservancies (Tarangle, 2009).

Program Strengths

Bear viewing within the KGBS is particularly successful due to the prioritization of grizzly bear conservation and apparent absence of violent relations between bears and humans within and surrounding the park. The KGBS and surrounding protected areas are managed by BC Parks in collaboration with local indigenous communities, including the Gitsi'is Tribe and the Coast Tsimshian First Nations (BC Parks, n.d.). Jamie Hahn explains that, “the Khutzeymateen is unique in the sense that it is an entire watershed and inlet that is protected and managed as a unit. It is way ahead in the sense that the government can manage it with first nations for the specific use of bear viewing. There was a lot of research done in the late 1980s to early 1990s that contributed to the area being protected and then putting in place a management plan through BC Parks” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). The combination of protected area designations and a joint management plan have led to success for the KGBS bear viewing program. Essentially, the KGBS has four main strengths, some of which have yet to be substantiated: indigenous empowerment, protection of grizzly bears *and* their habitat from hunting and viewing impacts, an emphasis on interpretation and education, and collaborative management between governments.

First, BC Parks claims that the KGBS promotes respect for, and empowerment of First Nations communities and governments as well as protection of their social and cultural values. According to BC Parks, the specific location of the KGBS falls within:

“The traditional territories of the Coast Tsimshian (Metlakatla and Lax Kwa'laams First Nations) who have occupied the area since time immemorial. Specifically, the area is within the traditional territory of the Gitsi'is. The Gitsi'is

(people of the seal trap) are one of nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes that make up the Coast Tsimshian First Nations. The Khutzeymateen protected areas are an intensive traditional use area within the territory of the Coast Tsimshian First Nations and have been used since time immemorial for cultural, social and economic purposes. The Khutzeymateen protects these important traditional harvesting resources, wildlife and biological diversity, and sustains traditional use opportunities.” (BC Parks, n.d.).

While this data is questionable because of its colonial source, First Nations communities may not currently be impeded culturally or economically by the establishment of these protected areas and bear viewing within it. BC Parks claims that these areas are managed and protected largely for the purpose of allowing them to carry out their traditional activities free from interference. Specifically, the KGBS management plan “also reflects the key importance of this area to the Coast Tsimshian peoples, and builds on their interest to ensure that their cultural and traditional rights within the area are respected ” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. iii). This claim by BC Parks should be verified with the Coast Tsimshian communities.

Furthermore, First Nations are also given the choice to utilize a reserved commercial bear viewing operator permit, an opportunity that will exist indefinitely according to the management plan. Indeed, Jamie Hahn confirms that “there is an allocation set aside for Lax Kwa’laams and Metlakatla First Nations which have overlapping territories. So if they did want to develop a business, they are part of the model already” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Thus, these communities do not appear to be pressured or coerced into assimilating or participating in

ecotourism and bear viewing, although their territory has been converted into a protected area by colonial forces. Simultaneously, the cost of starting and operating such a business may be impeding their ability to take advantage of this opportunity, and for them to benefit economically at all from the KGBS they must opt in. These tourism businesses, however, are extremely expensive to establish and operate as, in Jamie Hahn's experience, "It is tough to look at financing. It is an expensive operation with boats and floating barges" (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Consequently, Jamie Hahn also explains that, "Lax Kwa'laams did try to run a bear viewing operation but it wasn't successful and they just haven't taken the opportunity since" (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). While this reserved operator permit is notable and important, opportunities for bear viewing permits and successful businesses for First Nations communities must be made more equitable. Additional research is needed to find solutions to barriers that these operators and communities may face.

Moreover, even the plan's recommendations for tourism operators in the area to create partnerships and support First Nations are proving limited. First Nations, according to Jamie Hahn, "are getting very little out of the Khutzeymateen...two seasonal jobs, there is some flow of goods through the community but very little. Most of the services and supplies are coming out of Prince Rupert" (personal communication, November 24, 2016). Also, he shares that guide operators "are screened and invest in a ten year term" but that these contracts are only "awarded on a tenured basis by competition which reviews the businesses knowledge and experience in bear viewing and what they'll bring to the area" (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Essentially, this competition means that only those with access to guided bear viewing

experience, finances, and higher education will be likely to get a contract, limiting the opportunities of indigenous community members.

Along with these limited yet guaranteed opportunities for indigenous operators, this management plan also claims a collaborative approach to protected area management which is alleged to benefit First Nations communities culturally. This is stated explicitly in the management plan itself:

“These protected areas are managed collaboratively according to agreements
“between Lax Kwa’laams First Nation (2009) and the Ministry of Environment,
and Metlakatla First Nation (2007) and the Ministry of Environment”
(Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 6). These CMA’s,
among other things, protect First Nations communities culturally and ensure
“economic opportunities in a manner that ensures signatory First Nations achieve
an equitable portion of the economic opportunities available” (Khutzeymateen
Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 7).

Accordingly, the Lax Kwa’laams First Nation operates the “The K’tzim-a-deen Ranger program” which significantly serves as part of the KGBS protected areas management plan (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 12). According to BC Parks, this ranger program has allowed them to manage and administrate on their traditional territory (now a protected area), has been purported to strengthen these communities culturally, and possibly contribute to reconciliation between First Nations and the BC government (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 12). As outlined in the management plan, the ranger program and bear viewing have produced opportunities to “share and educate visitors and First Nation members about

Coast Tsimshian history and culture (e.g., through the on-site visitor centre displays)” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 12). Thus, where the KGBS falls short in economic benefits for First Nations communities, it allegedly benefits them culturally. However, these claims must be corroborated in the future as they are made by a colonial agency.

Second, and equally as important, the KGBS has established protections for grizzly bears and the habitat upon which they rely. The prioritization of First Nations cultural values appears to have, in essence, provided incentive for protecting grizzly bears in the Khutzeymateen protected areas. The central purpose of the KGBS is explained by BC Parks:

“To protect the north coast grizzly bear by the ecosystems in which they live.

These protected areas include an entire intact coastal watershed (Khutzeymateen-Kateen Rivers) and much of the land surrounding a fjord that contains a very high density of Grizzly Bears, with over 50 individual bears seen in one season. Such abundance is due to the high quality Grizzly Bear habitat in the area consisting of forbs and sedges (Lyngby’s sedge) and Pacific Salmon spawning streams.

Features associated with the bears include bear mark trails, rubbing trees and wallows” (BC Parks, n.d.).

In order to achieve this, the area is heavily regulated and monitored to ensure that the grizzly bears, and ecosystems more broadly, thrive for viewing. The management plan, for example, also guarantees the minimization of impacts on bears and bear viewing activities from aircraft access as well as commercial filming in the inlet (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 26-28). As detailed in the introduction of this

section, the prioritized wellbeing of grizzly bears is a notable and exemplary feature of the KGBS bear viewing program and management plan.

This successful protection of grizzly bears and habitat has been purportedly achieved through key strategies, including the banning of visitor land access and grizzly bear hunting within the KGBS. According to BC Parks, access is prohibited to the KGBS land and to the river estuary for the public unless accompanied by a guide in rare circumstances. Along with restricted public access to the KGBS, which largely protects biodiversity and the landscape from human impacts, the killing of grizzly bears is illegal within the KGBS and surrounding protected areas.

Unfortunately, other animals can simultaneously be killed in areas beyond a thousand metres elevation (BC Parks, n.d.). The reasoning behind this selective scheme is explicitly outlined in the management plan as follows:

“Since 1994, the hunting of Grizzly Bears has not been permitted within the park or in much of the surrounding land base. In June 2009, the Nass-Skeena Grizzly Bear No Hunting Area was expanded to include the majority of the Grizzly Bear Population Unit both within and surrounding the Khutzeymateen protected areas. The goal of this larger Grizzly Bear No Hunting Area is to provide a benchmark area that is not disturbed by hunting. Additionally, within the park hunting of other species is closed below 1,000 metres elevation. Above 1,000 metres the park is open to hunting of Mountain Goat” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 16).

This prohibition is said to provide security for grizzly bears within the KGBS while also securing “the future of ecotourism” which appears to be of great economic importance in the area (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. iii). Furthermore, hunting restrictions and prohibitions within the KGBS are meant to permit successful and quality guided bear viewing and other recreational use of the inlet (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. iii). These hunting restrictions, while limited, are still meaningful and contribute to the success of bear viewing and ecotourism in the KGBS. At the same time, it is unclear how local indigenous communities are impacted by these restrictions.

Along with the prohibition of grizzly hunting in the KGBS, bear viewing has been carefully planned and regulated in order to prevent negative impacts on the KGBS and the bears themselves. Specifically, one of the objectives of the KGBS management plan is, “To ensure bears are not displaced from prime foraging habitats if they are not tolerant to bear viewing activities” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p.25). This includes limiting all viewing operations to the water of the conservancies, making this a unique form of low-impact, water-based bear viewing. This has been outlined explicitly in the management plan:

“Bear viewing activities within Khutzeymateen Park will continue to be managed in a similar manner to the 1994 Interim Protection Plan by having small scale operations, and allowing only a small portion of the lower Khutzeymateen River to be available for human use which consequently provides a higher level of refuge for Grizzly Bears. The Khutzeymateen Inlet conservancies will be managed to allow a higher level of viewing activity; however, all viewing in the

conservancies will be water based” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 24).

Thus, while it is unclear from the data how effective this policy is in action, the Management Plan states that bear viewing is carefully monitored and regulated in the KGBS for the protection of bears and their habitats, ensuring low-impact ecotours.

Although the restricting of visitor movement makes opportunities for bear viewing more limited than other programs like the MRSGS, it still allows for an impressive bear viewing experience. Also, no viewing platform exists within the KGBS, yet “water-based bear and wildlife viewing” are still incredibly successful and this form of viewing is “excellent at river estuaries throughout the inlet” (BC Parks, n.d.). The KGBS, however, does plan “To investigate the feasibility of a fixed-viewing platform in the Khutzeymateen Inlet to minimize impact of human activity on bears” and continues “to support monitoring and research as part of an adaptive management framework.” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p.26-27). It appears that the KGBS is committed to an ongoing multispecies assessment of its bear viewing program.

In effect, the agreement for land use within the KGBS between the BC government and the Metlakatla First Nation has allowed for management that ensures both low-impact viewing with little disturbance to grizzly bears, while still ensuring good viewing experience for ecotourists (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011). This boat-based viewing also means that unlike the MRSGS, and according to Jamie Hahn, “There likely isn’t one firearm in the whole inlet during a season, unless it is in a private boat that we don’t know about. We have never carried firearms and we are not on the land very much” (Jamie Hahn Interview). Thus, there may be less likelihood of

conflict between humans and bears with this form of bear viewing compared to land-based viewing programs. This is a noteworthy advantage of the KGBS water-based bear viewing model.

Third, the transformative potential of bear viewing within the KGBS may be heightened by an emphasis on interpretive and educational visitor experiences. A central objective of the KGBS management plan is, “to sustainably manage commercial bear viewing operations,” and “to ensure that Grizzly Bear ecology and natural/cultural interpretation components area significant portion of the recreational experience.” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p.26). The KGBS claims to place great emphasis on sustainability, public education, and increasing public and visitor awareness about “bear ecology and conservation efforts” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 24). Accordingly, a guardian station is strategically placed within the KGBS as an immediate checkpoint that is meant to intercept visitors entering the estuary. At the same location, there is an interpretive centre which is open for public visitors throughout May to September (BC Parks, n.d.). In addition to bear awareness, and chiefly because of the KGBS’s high profile, BC Parks claims that visitors to the park are made culturally aware of, and help supply economic benefits to First Nations. This has yet to be proven. Specifically, guided “tours provide an important outlet for sharing information about the Coast Tsimshian culture and the importance of Grizzly Bear protection. Recreational use and sustainable tourism opportunities also support regional economic diversification” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 11). Its emphasis on education and information sharing, if as effective as proposed, may be valuable.

Fourth, the KGBS and surrounding protected areas are collaboratively managed through an elaborate partnership and management plan, and through The Park Act. It appears that while First Nations are not given full control and ownership over their territory and colonial relations between governments continue, previous power imbalances may be slightly neutralized through these policies. The partnership is explained on the BC Parks website:

“BC Parks, Lax Kwa’laams and Commercial Bear Viewing Guides have developed a collaborative Partnership that ensures the Khutzeymateen Protected Areas continue to be managed proactively and public access monitored conservatively to ensure the Grizzly Bears and their habitats are the first priority. The bear viewing guides contribute a per person donation to the Khutzeymateen Park Enhancement Fund that collectively supports shared stewardship initiatives for Khutzeymateen Protected Areas including: the K’tzim-a-deen Visitor Centre and interpretation services; natural and cultural resource monitoring and research; and to ensure visitors to the Khutzeymateen Protected Areas receive an orientation on responsible bear viewing techniques.” (BC Parks, n.d.).

This collaborative partnership between governments could be contributing to the success of bear viewing and protection of the KGBS.

Additionally, the Khutzeymateen protected areas are also governed by The Park Act, a colonial policy that is intended to ensure sustainable use and environmental protection. The Park Act states, “that a park use permit must not be issued to authorize commercial logging, mining, or hydro electric power generation, other than local run-of-the-river projects. “Local run-of-the-river projects” in relation to a conservancy, means

run-of-the-river projects supplying power for use (a) in the conservancy, or (b) by communities, including First Nation communities, that do not otherwise have access to hydro electric power” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 6). Permits for park use are only issued for construction, maintenance, or use of conservancy roads through which access is provided to “natural resources” outside of the conservancy (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 5). The Park Act could be an additional asset of the KGBS management scheme, yet more research is needed to understand the impacts of this policy and its associated park use permit system on local indigenous communities.

The KGBS management plan for bear viewing and protection appears to benefit grizzly bears as individuals and as a population. It may also include protections for First Nations traditional activities and cultural values. However, it would appear that the management plan for Khutzeymateen’s protected areas seeks to broadly protect “biological diversity” and “natural resources” with diminutive mention of other animal species as individuals (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 5). Still the KGBS is an important model for other locales seeking to establish bear viewing programs. Conversely, the limitations and weaknesses of the KGBS bear viewing model are argued below.

Program Limitations

While the KGBS claims significant cultural, species and environmental benefits, there are also limitations. The KGBS bear viewing program has somewhat lax tourist supervision, visitor accessibility limitations, scant employment opportunities, significant

seasonal constraints, and its regulation and management are still afflicted by colonial and anthropocentric leanings.

First, compared to the other bear viewing programs assessed in this study, there appears to be more potential for visitor and tourism impacts and misuse of the park. Visitors to the KGBS are loosely supervised, and instructions given to boaters may be ignored or un-enforced due to limited staffing. For example, BC Parks directs visitors to the information centre and advertise that, “Boaters entering the sanctuary should keep to the centre of the inlet to avoid disturbing bears. All visitors must register at the K’tzim-a-deen Ranger Station upon entering the sanctuary (BC Parks, n.d.). Despite these rules, as Jamie Hahn explains, there is concern about recreational boaters and fishing vessels going un-monitored in the Khutzeymateen Inlet (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). For example, Jamie Hahn argues that, “There are “sporties” and pleasure boats that come and go... if they are responsible and check in with the rangers, they go there first and get an orientation and then they are given the rules and regulations about where they can’t go ashore and how to view bears and to respect the operators that are working...” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). BC Parks similarly acknowledges that “Sporadic recreational boating and fishing also occurs in the Khutzeymateen Inlet... most recreational use is focussed on the observation of Grizzly Bears” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 16). However, the KGBS merely states its objective “to ensure vessel access to the inlet is conducted in manner that minimizes impacts on bears and bear-viewing activities” ((Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 27). The management plan outlines this issue

vaguely, with no indication of how the impacts will be minimized or rules effectively enforced by the pair of rangers working in the inlet.

Second, bear viewing in the KGBS is largely inaccessible for ecotourists of lower socioeconomic status due to transportation limitations and the expensive cost of tours and accommodation. This appears to be a common concern with ecotours and wildlife viewing. The KGBS is found in a remote and tumultuous area of British Columbia located forty-five kilometers from Prince Rupert and “the closest communities, towns and cities are Lax Kwa’laams, Kincolith, Port Edward, and Prince Rupert” (BC Parks, n.d.). The KGBS can only be accessed using marine transportation, and those entering the inlet are cautioned on the BC Parks website as follows:

“Visitors using the inlet as an overnight anchorage should be aware of tidal fluctuations, particularly near the estuary, where water depths can vary considerably. High winds are also frequent in this area” (BC Parks, n.d.).

This limited accessibility to the KGBS by land and alternative forms of transportation, while it is important for protecting bears, habitat and surrounding communities, means that only visitors who are boat owners or those who can afford to pay for a boat tour can access the KGBS. This does not guarantee that responsible tourists or bear viewers are entering, but simply guarantees access for wealthier boaters and tourists. It can be argued, however, that unlike other land-based forms of viewing, boat-based viewing is more accessible as it would allow those with limited mobility to view bears safely and comfortably.

In addition, tour packages within the KGBS are almost exclusively for overnight trips which are very costly. In comparison, the surrounding Khutzeymateen

conservancies have overnight trips in addition to shorter and more affordable day trips offered as well (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 22). For example, the Khutzymateen Wilderness Lodge offers a baseline four-hour long tour to the KGBS inlet which costs over \$575 for each person in a mandatory group of four (“Khutzymateen Wilderness Lodge...,” 2017). The alternative “Discover Tour,” which actually goes into the KGBS itself and includes accommodation unlike the other tour, costs over \$2390 per person on top of additional travel expenses to Prince Rupert (“Khutzymateen Wilderness Lodge...,” 2017). Similarly, the Ocean Light II Adventures, another boat tour operator within the KGBS, charges \$2449 per person for a four-day bear viewing trip (“Ocean Light II...,” 2017). Thus, the KGBS bear viewing tours likely are not accessible to those of lower socioeconomic status.

Third, and according to Jamie Hahn and BC Parks, seasonal limitations and visitor limits reduce the profitability of bear viewing within the KGBS. Consequently, in terms of employment opportunities, bear viewing is a restricted ecotourist activity in the KGBS. As of recently, only “two commercial tourism operators have park use permits to operate within Khutzymateen Park. These two operators conduct multi-day trips focussed on the Grizzly Bear viewing in the park. These operations also conduct viewing within the Khutzymateen Inlet conservancies. A third permit is reserved for a Coast Tsimshian opportunity for commercial bear viewing in the park but is not currently being used” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 15-16). In addition to these permit holding tourism operators, “three additional commercial tourism operators have regularly operated within the inlet conservancies. One operator has a foreshore lease for a marine-based lodge moored in Khutzymateen Inlet. The other two primarily offer

wildlife viewing day trips from Prince Rupert to the Khutzeymateen Inlet from May to July” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 16). Even more constricting is the allowance of only one Aircraft Company that is permitted to “land in the park in order to transfer bear viewing clients to vessels” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 16). This ultimately limits options for those seeking more affordable transportation, and for other aircraft and tour guide companies that could bring employment and sustainable ecotourism businesses to the area. Further, it may be limiting benefits for nearby communities including indigenous residents.

Nevertheless, some of its operating and transportation limitations cannot be avoided if habitat protection is to be effective, and bear viewing impacts minimized in the KGBS. The restricted number of permitted guides allowed to operate within the KGBS and surrounded protected areas are chosen by BC Parks. This prompts questions about who can afford to establish and operate viewing businesses, lodges, aircrafts, as well as access the training necessary to be successful in these pursuits. Who profits from bear viewing in the Khutzeymateen, and who gets employed in one of the six seasonal positions available out of the Khutzeymateen? Jamie Hahn shared that only two seasonal jobs are filled by First Nations community members and, “Both of the rangers are members of the local Lax Kwa’laams community and T’Simshan First Nations” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). While this is important, I would argue that it is not enough. The economic benefits of this management plan and bear viewing within the KGBS appear to be going to BC Parks, non-indigenous tourism business owners, and neighbouring locales (such as Prince Rupert). Clearly the colonial government and BC Parks are the main beneficiaries of the KGBS, and there is little data

or evidence to prove otherwise. More measures for equitable allocation of operator permits and guide positions need to be employed.

Fourth, while Grizzly Bears are prized culturally and protected within the KGBS and surrounding protected areas, other animals are excluded as commercial exploitation of multiple species persists. For example, the Khutzeymateen protected areas authorize multiple commercial traplines, as well as commercial crabbing and fishing (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 17). It is unclear, however, the number and specific species of animals killed by commercial trapping within and surrounding the KGBS. In addition, Jamie Hahn problematizes commercial fishing vessels, and the practice of “commercial crabbing” in the inlet, stating that “there are two or three boats that work the inlet most of the summer. That has a bit of an impact too, and on our ability to catch crab because they fish it out so hard” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Furthermore, when we discussed the potential impact of climate change in combination with commercial fishing on bear viewing and local communities in the area, Jamie Hahn gave important insight:

“Especially with rising sea levels that would be a concern, and loss of the lyngby sedge habitat. Although, it would have to be an extreme change. But I think the biggest threat that I have seen for the success of my business personally is if the salmon runs don’t come back. That is just so out of our control with commercial fishing and sport commercial fishing, and offshore fishing that’s not even managed by our government” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Consequently, it would appear that this model of bear viewing and management plan are still vulnerable to impacts from tourist and commercial exploitation. Despite these limitations, the KGBS illuminates areas of possibility and important lessons to be utilized by other locales seeking to implement similar bear viewing and management programs. These lessons are elucidated in the subsequent section.

Program Lessons

The KGBS bear and land protection is important for human and nonhuman animals residing in the Khutzymateen area. The KGBS is a successful bear viewing program despite its limitations and colonial nature. This model shows the importance of indigenous involvement and consultation, preliminary and ongoing research assessment, as well as consistent and nonviolent human-bear relations in establishing bear viewing. At the same time, there is much work to be done in and around the KGBS in order to decolonize its policy and bear viewing model, challenge power imbalances between the provincial and First Nations governments, and to better empower indigenous communities through this program.

First, the KGBS demonstrates the importance of ongoing consultation with local communities, and inclusion of First Nations primarily at all stages of program planning and implementation. It was recognized by BC Parks in planning the management of the Khutzymateen that “ongoing engagement and outreach with local communities will be required to ensure that residents are aware of and supportive of the protected areas system” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 7). Allied First Nations communities provided direction and plans for land use in the area based on their

needs and desires first and foremost, which has also led to the successful protection of grizzly bears and attention to tourism values within the KGBS (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 8). The inclusion of First Nations communities, including the Gitsi'is Tribe and the Coast Tsimshian, in the KGBS planning team and numerous meetings appears meaningful. This inclusion of First Nations communities in planning, implementation, and management is notable, although still quite partial and insufficient in the KGBS, and could be useful in planning for an improved policy in northern Ontario as well. I would argue, however, that all steps of this process should be led by local First Nations communities and their governments, with the provincial government, ministries, NGOs, and research institutions providing assistance and resources as needed and invited. They should also be given equitable opportunities and be the principal beneficiaries of the KGBS as it is on their traditional territory.

Along with the importance of consultation and the need for further indigenous empowerment, the need for extensive preliminary research prior to initiating bear viewing is emphasized by this case study. The Khutzymateen protected areas were thoroughly taken inventory of by the BC Conservation Corps and the University of Northern BC. Specifically, they “acquired baseline information on the Grizzly Bears within Khutzymateen Inlet, and observed bear reactions to recreation use. This information has helped inform the development of this management plan” (Khutzymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 9). Thus, a great deal of preparation went into developing proper management of bear viewing in this area, and a management plan for the land and marine areas within it.

In order to implement high quality bear viewing planning, BC Parks first consulted with specialists. This process is highlighted in the Management Plan:

“The Khutzeymateen Management Planning team hired a consultant to provide scientific advice on bear viewing and its impacts in the Khutzeymateen protected areas, and to suggest the carrying capacity of the protected area for Grizzly Bear viewing. The consultant completed a review of bear viewing literature and relevant scientific studies to compare present management with current industry best practices. All commercial bear viewing operators were interviewed to assess and compile personal knowledge and opinions on present and possible future management” (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 10).

Multiple public comment sessions, open houses, and workshops were also held following the creation of the management plan in order to review current bear viewing practices and to identify issues. The meetings allegedly allowed for the plan to be reviewed and revised among First Nations, NGOS, and the BC Ministry of the Environment (Khutzeymateen Protected Areas Management Plan, 2011, p. 10). It is unclear if these meetings and public sessions were meaningful or if the concerns of these communities carried any weight in forming policy. Still, this example of careful planning may provide lessons that are transferable and imperative for developing low-impact and sustainable ecotourism and bear viewing in other contexts.

In addition to consultation, preliminary research, and careful monitoring of impacts, the KGBS highlights the importance of consistent and non-violent human-bear interactions. Jamie Hahn emphasizes the importance of consistency, and similar to the MRSGS, argues that there are no documented incidents of human-bear conflict within the

KGBS since its establishment (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Jamie Hahn has also argued that, “Consistency in bear viewing is one of the biggest keys to its success. It involves the same routine over and over and bears are very adaptable to that if it is maintained consistently” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Furthermore, he contends that bear hunting and bear viewing are incompatible because humans have to be “consistent about how we work around them [bears]” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). This confirms the findings of Debruyn & Smith discussed in previous chapters (Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7). Although there are no grizzly bears present in Ontario (Errington, 2016), Jamie Hahn argues that, in comparison to grizzly bear viewing, “Black bears can be habituated in the same way for sure. You see it in the central coast and along the highways here even” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). This is promising for northern Ontario communities seeking to implement similar programs, although they will be protecting and viewing black bears rather than grizzly bears.

Conclusion

Due to consultation and involvement in planning and implementation of the Khutzeymateen protected areas and the bear viewing program, First Nations communities have purportedly consented to the establishment of the KGBS and may be benefitting from it culturally. Bear viewing may align with the cultural values of Lax Kwa’laams First Nations, and it also allegedly seeks to protect their other cultural values, the land, and grizzly bears. Simultaneously, converting First Nations territory into parks for protection but also for tourism and commercial purposes is problematic when they do not

appear to be the primary beneficiaries of this arrangement. The ministry of BC Parks still holds veto power over the land and its management, and First Nations are essentially sidelined. Still, it would be inappropriate, as a settler, for me to assume the feelings of indigenous peoples about their land and this agreement. Conversely, more research is needed in order to fully understand how ongoing colonialism coincides with the collaborative protection and management of the KGBS.

Power imbalances between First Nations government and BC's provincial government do appear to be somewhat minimized through the collaborative establishment of the KGBS and surrounding protected areas and conservancies. While this is a notable effort at co-management, the problematic colonial history of BC Parks (For more information refer to "A History of BC Parks," 2017), and the exclusivity of protected areas prompts concerns about whether First Nations communities are truly empowered by this partnership. Shultis & Heffner (2016) problematize westernized notions of conservation which protected areas and parks are based upon, and suggest that park agencies should allow "indigenous communities complete control of parks, jettisoning a flawed co-management system which is almost completely driven by western ontology and epistemology" (p. 1239). This insight is important to consider for this model.

At the same time, while the KGBS incorporates multispecies objectives and considerations, it appears that local indigenous communities are not benefiting monetarily from the park's operations aside from two employed community members; most of the economic benefits related to ecotourism are garnered by Prince Rupert instead of nearby indigenous communities. This is a clear example of 'leakage', a

phenomenon and problem discussed in earlier chapters. Moreover, as Jamie Hahn argued, the cost of operating a bear viewing business is incredibly expensive, and this may be inhibiting local First Nations communities from operating within the KGBS. In addition, the fees associated with tours and necessary transportation are only accessible to those segments of society with considerable disposable income, which excludes many residents and ecotourists from the KGBS.

In terms of interspecies solidarity, the KGBS is impressive while still limited in the ways discussed above. There are important lessons to be learned about interspecies relations from this model. Fundamentally, the KGBS is yet another example of bear viewing which depends on the positive habituation of grizzly bears to human presence, and where human-bear conflict is essentially nonexistent. Similar to John Hechtel, Jamie Hahn explains with certainty that, “A habituated bear is not a threat to a bear population, and we are not impacting them in any kind of way even close to being measurable compared to habitat loss or hunting. It can work, but some people just don’t want to turn their head around the fact that a bear who doesn’t run isn’t a danger” (J. Hahn, personal communication, November 24, 2016). The notion that we must live in an adversarial relationship with grizzly bears is ultimately challenged by the acts of interspecies solidarity evident within the KGBS.

c. Grizzly Bear and Spirit Bear Viewing in the Great Bear Rainforest

Along with the MRSGS and the KGBS, bear viewing within the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR), while still in its infancy, is an extremely successful and important model to examine. The following section details the many benefits, limitations, and important lessons learned from bear viewing in the GBR. Brian Falconer, a guide,

outfitter and coordinator with Raincoast Conservation Foundation, shared his experience and expertise on the current state of bear viewing within the GBR in our interview.

This assessment is important as, according to the Board of Inquiry Report (2017), the commercial bear viewing industry has grown markedly in the last two decades and continues to grow in success especially in Coastal regions of BC. The Report argues that this industry is having a massive economic impact in BC and that “bear viewing generated 12 times ore visitor spending and 11 times more government revenue than grizzly hunting” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 10). According to this report, there are over thirty operators specialized in bear viewing in BC “as well as some ecotourism operations that include bear viewing, most but not all of them located on the Coast” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 49). Clearly, bear viewing is a growing and prosperous ecotourist activity in British Columbia, with some of the most notable operators existing in the GBR.

Background

Although bear viewing is offered and renowned throughout the GBR, the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy (KSBC) is the only area in the GBR protected specifically for the safety of bears. In collaboration with the Valhalla Wilderness Society, British Columbia’s’ Gitga’at and Kitasoo Xai’xais First Nations established a composite of “10 spirit bear habitat conservancies totaling 212,415 hectares. The largest of these conservancies is known as the “Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy” comprised of 103,000 hectares of the Canoona River and the area of south Princess Royal Island including all of Laredo Inlet, a 30 km long fjord that runs up from the south end of the island” (“Kitasoo Spirit Bear...,” 2016). The KSBC is also made up of “more than 50 salmon streams,

approximately 120 Spirit Bears, 1200 Black bears, Grizzly bears and an incredible wolf-deer predator-prey system with up to 16,000 Sitka deer” (“Kitasoo Spirt Bear...,” 2016).

Of specific interest here, and according to the government of British Columbia, “The Great Bear Rainforest is a global treasure that covers 6.4 million hectares on British Columbia’s north and central coast – equivalent in size to Ireland” (“British Columbia: Great...,” 2016). The GBR is renowned as the only home of the “Spirit Bear” (also known as a Kermode bear), a unique species of black bear who carries a gene for white fur. The spirit bear is British Columbia’s official animal and has inspired campaigns to end trophy hunting within the GBR. The Spirit Bear is alleged “to be a genetic variation of the black bear, science shows a single recessive gene is responsible for the bear’s blonde coat. That’s why a black bear female can give birth to a Kermode, as all black bears in the region carry this recessive gene” (“Mammal Spotlight: Kermode...,” 2016). Coastal First Nations communities are also said to hold Spirit Bears “in high regard, believing the animal to have supernatural powers and the ability to make itself invisible. In some communities, this bear is also known as “Ghost Bear” (“Mammal Spotlight: Kermode...,” 2016). According to estimates from the National Geographic, there are between four hundred and one thousand individual Spirit Bears living in the GBR. This healthy population, they argue, may have largely survived because of the protections and traditions afforded to them by First Nations communities “who never hunted the animals or spoke of them to fur trappers” (Greenpeace, 2016).

Bear viewing within British Columbia, and in the GBR in particular, are described as a valuable part of an apparent “cultural and economic revival” of CFN communities (Center for Responsible Travel, 2014, p. 16). The continued presence of bears in the GBR

plays an important role in economic empowerment, alongside CFN working to achieve more control over decision-making in the GBR. For example,

“The Spirit Bear is the main reason why people come and visit the Kitasoo/Xai’xais. Using Klemtu as their base, clients from around the world travel here to take pictures and memories home with them, after experiencing a world class wildlife experience. Focusing on the white bear, lead guide and bear expert Doug Neasloss will continue to lead this product and will carry the name of the company through the marketing literature. This stream will employ a Lead Guide, Assistant Guides and Boat Operators” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for Kitasoo/Xai’xais First Nation, Klemtu, BC, p. 37).

There are currently “between 18,000 and 20,000 coastal First Nations people live in this region; archeological evidence dates their settlements back at least 10,000 years” (Center for Responsible Travel, 2014, p. 16). These communities have been impacted by colonization socially, spiritually, and economically, and continues to negatively impact them. However, the current revitalization and empowerment of these communities taking place alongside bear viewing in the GBR promises to challenge ongoing colonialism.

Program Strengths

After reviewing data from websites, news articles, tourism policy documents, and the transcript of my interview with Brian Falconer, it becomes evident that bear viewing in the GBR may have many benefits. Notably, its strengths include growing economic benefits for local and indigenous communities, powerful advocacy for bear and habitat protection through grassroots movements and alliances, and an alternative indigenous-led management program. These noteworthy features are examined below.

First and foremost, bear viewing in the GBR is said to be providing outstanding economic benefits. The allure of Kermode bears and bear viewing has seemingly brought, and continues to bring considerable revenue to communities within and surrounding the GBR. It has been found that, “Kermode bear or Spirit bear viewing is also experiencing significant growth in part due to the recent exposure with the CCLRMP and the Kitasoo/Xai’xais Spirit Bear Conservancy, and the Spirit Bear becoming a provincial symbol” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for Kitasoo/Xai’xais First Nation, Klemtu, BC, p. 34). McSheffrey(2016) also writes that “With more than \$1 million in grants from the Economic Development Fund between 2010 and 2015, the Kitasoo Development Corporation has doubled its occupancy, renovated, advertised internationally, and trained youth in bear-guiding” (n.p.).

Furthermore, according to the Board of Inquiry Report (2017), bear viewing in BC has brought operators considerable revenue, and it also continues to offer “first hand and up-close education to thousands of people about grizzly bears, how they live and what they need to survive” (p. 49). This report also details the criteria of successful bear viewing proposed by Aumiller & Matt (see page 49) and argues that “considerable skill, knowledge and financial resources are necessary to ensure a safe experience for people and bears and one that can be sustained over time” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 49). Most pertinently, they recommend that the provincial government “regulate the bear viewing industry in consultation with representatives of this industry” and I would argue, with indigenous communities as well (p. 50). Similar reports could be completed in planning for bear viewing in northern Ontario, and many of this report’s recommendations are transferable and could be useful for other locales as well.

In addition to the economic benefits, bear viewing is also purportedly benefiting local communities culturally, and in particular, helping Coastal First Nations communities build their power. Benefits for local communities that have been investigated and argued previously include “employment, capacity building, access to knowledge,” “Cultural preservation and pride,” “social equity and security,” “sense of place,” “infrastructure and capital,” and “economic diversification and value added” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for Kitasoo/Xai’xais First Nation, Klemtu, BC, p. 36). Even throughout other parts of BC, several First Nations communities are proactively working with grizzly bears and developing bear viewing. For example, The Homalco and Heiltsuk First Nations are researching, analyzing DNA, and monitoring the populations of grizzly bears in their territories, with the Homalco “doing so to ensure that sustainable bear viewing is neutral on grizzlies” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 11). If listening to these nations, the cultural and economic importance of bear viewing for them cannot be overstated.

Secondly, in addition to the economic and cultural benefits, one of the fundamental strengths evident in this case study is that bear viewing in the GBR has ascended in success alongside, and in part because of resilient alliances and grassroots and organized resistance to trophy bear hunting and deforestation. This has involved strong coalitions between CFNs and NGOS, specifically, with Raincoast Conservation Foundation (RCF). Trophy hunting has been resisted by CFNs in collaboration with RCF, and while CFN have imposed a ban on trophy hunting within the GBR, it has not been honoured or enforced by the government or respected by other residents of BC thus far

(Neasloss, Falconer, & Genovali, 2016; Lindsay, 2015). Bear trophy hunting in the GBR will be discussed further in the GBRA results section below.

In addition, this impressive alliance between CFNs and RCF has resulted in an innovative strategy for Kermode and grizzly bear hunting resistance and the conversion of hunting businesses to ecotourism. RCF and CFN have worked together to gradually purchase all of the hunting tenures and the rights to guide hunters within the GBR and to pressure the BC government for changes in licensing and for other legal exemptions (Norden, 2013, p. 19). Brian Falconer summarizes this strategy and its importance well during our interview:

“In 2001, we managed a moratorium on grizzly hunting across the province. It was a three year moratorium. The NDP government was in trouble with its Green wing. It has really alienated the Green wing of its party. Fairly close the election, we managed to pressure them into a three year moratorium on grizzly hunting. They compensated the guide outfitters for hunts already booked. It was about 1.3 million dollars they gave to the guide outfitters. Within three months of being elected, the liberal government in BC rescinded that at the same time as the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. They were allowed to go back hunting grizzlies. This was a government that ideologically wasn’t going to support the end of trophy hunting. After a period of short depression, we decided to see what we could do. We [Raincoast] made an offer on the first territory, which was accepted. We purchased the exclusive hunting rights over a large area. We do not buy the land, but what we are doing is buying the tenure. These are the exclusive rights to guide hunters. In order to feed that industry, the government made it mandatory

that if you don't live in BC and you want to kill wildlife, you've got to come with a guide outfitter. The guide outfitter territories became worth large money. As grizzly bears in particular, but as a lot of wildlife populations diminished in different parts of the world, people pay more and more to come and kill a beautiful animal. A lot of those territories then became worth a lot of money" (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

The innovative strategy for converting hunting businesses to ecotourism, and resisting bear hunting for the benefit of local communities and bear viewing is remarkable and a clear example of the principle of humane jobs in action.

Furthermore, for more than a decade RCF and other proponents of bear viewing have worked together, purchasing "the exclusive territories from three hunting guide outfitters, thereby successfully halting non-resident hunting of grizzlies in these areas which include a large swath of the central coast" (Center for Responsible Travel, 2014, p. 13-14). Indeed, Brian Falconer discusses the allocation of bear hunting between resident and non-resident hunters, the requirement for guides to be used by non-resident hunters, and the strategic way that this works. He explains that hunting guides can:

"Use that allocation to charge people 20-30 thousand dollars to come and kill a grizzly bear. We [Raincoast] recognized that by buying this out, we could basically cut the hunt in half. Sixty-fourty is what we aimed for, but over the years statistically it has worked out to about half resident and half non-resident. We realized it wasn't a complete solution on the other hand. It was going to save half of the kill. We bought the first territory [rights] in 2005 and we paid 1.3 million dollars for it. We had some concerns. There are requirements under the

wildlife act that we had to hunt. I conducted a number of hunts, and we were completely unsuccessful. We have had to continue doing those hunts over the years and every year we do at least one grizzly bear hunt and every year it is unsuccessful. We have managed to maintain the quota, the licenses, and after a couple of years we decided it was a good idea so we bought another one. We have just finished our third acquisition. We now have our exclusive hunting territory where we have the exclusive hunting rights. It covers about 32 thousand square kilometers, almost all in the Great Bear Rainforest. It is our objective to buy the trophy hunting rights, the guiding rights, through the entire Great Bear Rainforest” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

This strategy also appears to be a show of solidarity with CFN, as the RCF is partnered with them and consider this to be an “equal partnership.” Brian Falconer states that RCF, is “buying these territories out, and we will hold these territories and operate them until such time that we get an agreement from the government that they can be rescinded. They will go into the hands of First Nations and be rescinded” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Future research should further examine these arrangements and verify these claims with indigenous communities and business owners of the GBR.

Thus, the RCF is claimed to be working as a partner and ally to CFN in order to assist them in gaining back control over their own lands, resources, and in protecting the bears who live in the GBR and who ensure their businesses succeed. The RCF has avoided loopholes by ensuring that, “The provincial government signed an agreement to not reallocate the bears in this area. They can’t simply take the bears that we aren’t

killing and give them to resident hunters. That was an important step. That has freed us up and we have three offers going in on the next three territories, which will more than double the area to be very close to 70 thousand kilometers where there will be no commercial bear hunting. We are also working hard pressuring the government and the opposition to take a stand about killing bears in the Great Bear Rainforest” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Unfortunately, resident hunters are not prevented from killing bears in the GBR through this strategy because they are not required to hire a guide and thus, are not affected by the purchasing of hunting guide tenures (Norden, 2013, p. 20). Still, the empowerment of indigenous communities, and the fight for multispecies justice through this alliance is encouraging. RCF also says it seeks to fairly compensate and assist business owners with the transition, some of whom are multi-generational hunting businesses within the GBR.

Thirdly, and along with these promising and powerful alliances, a successful alternative management program has also been created. The Coastal Guardian or Watchmen Program “is an initiative that was developed by BC Coastal First Nation Communities to control and participate in the stewardship and monitoring of their traditional lands and waters. This program is a mechanism for the Kitasoo/Xai’xais to ensure that the activities and practices within their territory are consistent with community plans and government regulations” (tourism strategy 2009 p. 64-65). However, enforcement has been a problem for bear viewing guides and the Watchmen of Kitasoo/Xai’xais. The limitations of their work are detailed in the Tourism Strategy, which states that they are only able to:

“Record and report the activities they see happening. They have no legal authority to enforce violations to the BC Parks Act or illegal hunting or fishing. Their presence does make a difference but the watchmen can only be in one area at a time. On the weekends, there is no one monitoring the territory. The Spirit Bear Eco tours staff is also part of the monitoring program and can be “eyes and ears”. With the guides out everyday in the high season, this doubles the monitoring effort. But just like the Watchmen, the guides have no authority” (Tourism Strategy, 2009, p. 65-66).

Brian Falconers explains that CFNs have had to fund the Watchmen Program without government assistance. Nevertheless, this program has expanded, “and all of the coastal nations across the province now have coastal guardians” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Falconer states that they currently are without enforcement powers, but as a result of increased community pressure on the government that is changing. This will “dramatically reduce poaching” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). This program has essentially assisted ecotourism businesses in the Great Bear Rainforest, even with limited power, allowing them to flourish while it continues the monitoring and protection of their territories, “cracking down on hunters hoping to kill grizzlies and other wildlife” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25).

This program has expanded and now includes a certification program which contains four modules. The Tourism Strategy outlines the specifics of this certificate program:

“The Guardian Watchman Program addresses an issue articulated by most First Nations communities and shared by many people in rural areas of western Canada – the need to build capacity of community-based resource practitioners to ensure sustainable natural and cultural resource management practices are being implemented and adhered to on local lands and waters. The Certificate program consists of 4 modules. The first module is a suite of Safety Certifications, followed by 3 modules of 24-credit field-based courses pertaining to natural and cultural resources and activities that might impact the sustainability of those resources” (Tourism Strategy, 2009, p. 65).

In certifying local community members and training them to work in resource management and to monitor the impacts of human activities, CFN guides and the Watchmen have worked together to prevent the killing of bears and other wildlife, and to ensure that their businesses flourish (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25).

Indeed, the power of this model appears to be growing. According to Coast Funds, “First Nations are monitoring commercial activities by creating and expanding 14 monitoring and Guardian Watchman programs, covering an average area of at least 1.7 million hectares annually” (Guy, September 14, 2016). This alternative management program, in combination with its certificate program and strong alliances, have purportedly worked to support the success of ecotourism and bear viewing within the GBR and ensure benefits for local communities.

Program Limitations

While bear viewing and resource management in the GBR are exemplary and impressive, there remain several limitations affecting the growth of ecotourism and bear

viewing in the region. First, the industry of bear viewing and ecotourism in the GBR have been limited by competition with other resource-based industries, government, and developers. Second, employment opportunities are limited, although promising changes are taking place and growth is apparent. Third, bear viewing in the GBR, similar to other programs, is relatively inaccessible and expensive. Fourth, bears and other animals currently have inadequate protection from hunting and commercial exploitation in the GBR, a point which will be discussed in-depth in the GBRA section.

First, the industry of bear viewing has been limited by deficient infrastructure, institutional barriers, and competition for land and resources in British Columbia. Specifically, limitations include the “industry regulation by government,” “lack of long term guarantee of tonsuring of the land base,” “competition for natural resources among multiple industries,” “lack of security regarding long term integrity of view scapes,” “high marketing costs,” “transportation and access,” “small employment pool for trained personnel at high training costs,” “business development,” and “challenges in maintaining control of regional development” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for Kitasoo/Xai’xais First Nation, Klemtu, BC, p. 35). Evidently, there are multiple barriers impeding the full potential of ecotourism, and bear viewing specifically in the GBR and British Columbia more broadly.

Second, in terms of employment, it is unclear how many jobs will be created as bear viewing develops in the GBR, but it can be argued that this work of guiding and monitoring ecosystems is invaluable and can offer a range of humane jobs for those seeking alternatives to guiding hunts and precarious work. Opportunities for development and increased benefits reported to exist nearly a decade ago with the “growth of

eco/adventure tourism and cultural tourism markets,” “growing awareness of the “Great Bear Rainforest”, “Spirit Bear” etc.,” “existing and new tourism infrastructure,” “government and community support for tourism development,” and through “tourism alliances” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for KITASOO/XAI’XAIS First Nation, KLEMTU, BC, p. 36). This is promising for other locales in Canada hoping to establish ecotourism and bear viewing businesses. This growth and support for bear viewing in the GBR and BC more broadly has led to important developments, such as the creation of a guide certification program. At the same time, it is unclear how much employment growth has resulted from ecotourism and bear viewing in the GBR, if any.

While current employment is still minimal, a concern that cuts across the other bear viewing programs examined, employment and training in guiding are on the rise. British Columbia’s Commercial Bear Viewing Association (CBVA) created a two-level certification system for bear viewing guides. The system requires that those interested register in a course for training as an assistant guide in order to gain an Assistant Guide certification, after which they “have 60 days of field experience working with bears under the supervision of a Full Guide” (“What we do...,” 2016). In addition, companies that are members of and advertised through the CBVA may only hire guides who are certified through British Columbia’s CBVA, ensuring a standard of excellence in their businesses. There are 210 certified guides listed on the CBVA website to date (“Guides: Commercial Bear...,” 2016), an impressive number considering how many people served by each individual wildlife or bear viewing guide. For example, Doug Neasloss, the Chief Councillor of the KITASOO/XAI’AIS First Nation, has been “recognized as a premier bear and wildlife guide, his knowledge of the territory and the viewing spots enable him to

give each client an extraordinary experience” (Tourism Strategy 2009, prepared for Kitasoo/Xai’xais First Nation, Klemtu, BC, p. 41). Thus, bear viewing in the GBR clearly provides limited yet meaningful humane jobs for local communities.

Third, and along with industry and employment limitations of bear viewing in the GBR, it appears that bear viewing in the GBR is quite expensive and remote. This is making it inaccessible to a significant segment of the population, both visiting and local. According to the Canadian Press, “First Nations and tourism operators in British Columbia say better access to the Great Bear Rainforest is needed in order for people to enjoy what the province describes as B.C.’s gift to the world. A report from aboriginals, businesses and communities in the Central Coast region has concluded that transportation challenges in the area are hurting tourism opportunities at the same time as First nations tourism potential is exploding in other parts of the B.C.” (“Great Bear Rainforest struggling...,” March 23, 2016). This confirms concerns over lacking infrastructure and access to the GBR communicated in the Tourism Strategy (2009). According to Travis Hall, Councillor of the Heiltsuk Nation, the ability of his community to develop tours in the GBR have been slowed by limited and expensive transportation services to the GBR coastal communities (“Great Bear Rainforest struggling...,” March 23, 2016). These limitations have yet to be addressed.

Furthermore, the cost of eco and bear viewing tours in the GBR is expensive. For example, a pricing chart from the Spirit Bear Lodge was acquired by request, outlining the cost of trips for four day trip packages starting at \$2,640 per adult (\$1,770 per child) to seven day packages up to \$9,635 per adult (\$3,755 per child). These prices vary depending on the number of persons attending (single, double, or triple) and by seasonal

demand, and do not include taxes, staff gratuities, and additional personal expenses. These fees include transportation, accommodation, and meals as well as a range of other educational and recreational services depending on the chosen package (2017 Spirit Bear Lodge Canadian Dollar Retail Tariff, Spirit Bear Lodge, p. 6). Evidently, this is a very exclusive example of bear viewing and an expensive ecotourist venture. On the other hand, this can also be interpreted as a massive asset for local communities, as they can limit the number of visitors, which will ensure a quality experience and low-impact bear viewing and ecotourism, while still providing considerable profits. Evidently, while bear viewing in the GBR may be inaccessible to those of lower socioeconomic status, this may be a necessary trade-off in order to ensure the minimization of impacts on bears, their habitat, and host communities.

Program Lessons

Although this program is in its early stages and slightly disorganized, there is important knowledge to be gained. Bear viewing within the GBR features several important keys to success, as well as hurdles to overcome. The importance of preliminary research, the incompatibility of hunting and viewing, the continuing inequitable treatment of different bear species, and promising messages of transformational interspecies relations can be induced from this case study. Notably, many of these lessons and successful components are transferable and can be used as guidance by other locales, such as northern Ontario.

First, bear viewing in the GBR demonstrates that research needs to be conducted prior to the initiation of bear viewing and the creation of accompanying ecotourism businesses. The Spirit Bear Lodge, for example, began with multiple seasons of testing

their services and product before “really promoting this accommodation as a product unto itself” (tourism strategy check 2009 p. 50). This is supported by much of the literature on wildlife and bear viewing discussed in previous chapters.

Second, bear viewing and the violently consumptive nature of hunting are incompatible in the GBR, an important point made about human-wildlife relations more broadly by Debruyn & Smith (Hill & Gale, 2009, Chapter 7). In my interview with Brian Falconer, he explains that the most fundamental reason for this incompatibility is that “bear viewing depends on a very predictable relationship between people and bears” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 14, 2016). In discussing his experience operating a tourism business in Muscle Inlet, he argued that bears were present but eluded humans because of hunting in the area. Then, remarkably, he observed that:

“After we purchased that territory, and the hunting stopped there, the bears started to come out and stay out. You would go in there and find, within two years of us buying the territories, you’d have 10, 11, 12 grizzly bears feeding along those stream banks, and they weren’t concerned about people because they had learned that those people weren’t going to harm them. That relationship is critical to bear viewing” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Essentially, humans cannot have a relationship of both trust and of violence with bears simultaneously. This argument was made by all three key informants Brian Falconer also recognizes that “bears have different personalities like people. They are not numbers in a management plan, they are individuals and they have different levels of tolerance for people. Some are extremely comfortable with people. Some are relaxed bears and will come quite close. Others, despite the fact that their experience doesn’t include any bad

interactions with humans, they are just more wary” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Therefore the ability to view a bear is not always guaranteed, and in addition to damaging trust, the hunting of bears further impedes the success of bear viewing and chances for positive human-bear relations.

Third, the potential importance of NGO’s role in establishing and supporting bear viewing in the GBR, who have worked in solidarity with CFN communities for decades, must be fervently re-emphasized. RCF in particular worked with CFNs to “do research that is relevant to them and the questions that they have because they are going to be the manager of this landscape and are going to be making the decisions about resource use. Helping them develop the capacity to make those decisions with much more information than they’ve had in the past is a really important role. It was a very valuable alliance and NGOs were important in that” (B. Falconer, personal communication November 24, 2016). This successful coalition between RCF, CFN, and other environmental organizations is rooted in an understanding that “Whatever the solutions, they must come from those communities. They can’t come from the city and be imposed on those communities. That awareness has to come within those communities and it often comes from courageous people being successful with businesses” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). In essence, First Nations communities and CFNs have expressed their commitment to bear viewing and bear protection in the GBR, and NGOs have helped, and will continue to work with them to achieve this successfully.

Fourth, it is clear from my interview with Brian Falconer that not all bears are valued, respected, or thought to be deserving of protection and admiration in BC. Black bears, aside from the small percentage of those considered to be Spirit Bears or carrying

the gene, are still largely undervalued and defamed as pests. As he explained, “There is less enthusiasm across the province for protecting black bears. They have a higher reproductive ability. They have higher population. They are much more adaptable to human inhabited areas. They live better in close proximity to humans....There is less concern. Ethically I don’t think that is the case. A bear is a bear to most people who don’t kill them... they kill far more black bears than they do grizzly bears in British Columbia every year; about 10 to 1....There isn’t the same passion for protecting black bears...” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). This insight is important and troublesome, as inequities between brown bears and black bears appears to be common across Canada and in Alaska.

Lastly, this study has demonstrated that re-imagining a formerly exploited and undervalued space, even by simply changing its name, can potentially transform relations between humans, other species, and the land. Before being known as the GBR, this area of land was considered the “‘Mid-Coast Timber Supply Area’ and the ‘North Coast Timber Supply Area’” by industry and government in BC (Center for Responsible Travel, 2014, p. 16). This changed when environmental organizations and CFN joined forces in a campaign to protect and conserve it from logging and other industry in the 1990s, adopting a different name “as part of their initiative to protect the area” (Center for Responsible Travel, 2014, p. 17). Falconer argues that this transformation can occur in other locales simply by “understanding and identifying the core values of that place, and changing how people think about it” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Brian Falconer argues that this transformation certainly occurred within the GBR. He explains the reimagining of the GBR:

“It was called the mid-coast timber supply area, and known as a place to cut down trees. Through massive media efforts, which was one of the most important things, people started to understand how precious, beautiful, and completely rare it is. Identifying it as a place like no other was key along with first nation’s voices in that... Forces of destruction, and industrialization are massive and instant. It takes forever to protect something and seconds to lose it. It takes relentless pursuit by multiple interested parties and a great passion. That has certainly happened here” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Therefore, this area was essentially transformed in the imaginations of tourists, environmentalists, and coastal communities by changing its name to the GBR, reflecting an appreciation of the “thousands of grizzlies, black bears and the unique white-coated Spirit Bears” who inhabit the GBR (Center for Responsible Tourism, 2014, p. 17).

Falconer proposes that in order for a similar bear viewing model to be implemented elsewhere, it would have to be rooted in the hard work and grassroots resistance of indigenous communities, environmental organizations, and businesses. Specifically, he argues that:

“It requires committed groups of activists in these places who are willing to dedicate years of their life to this. That is the basic commonality of all of these protected areas, was that they had champions; people who simply didn’t give up and wouldn’t take no for an answer. That is the most important part. What has been happening in British Columbia with first nations has been smouldering for a while, and is now in full flame. First nations across North America are really

starting to successfully stand up, and those decisions are starting to go in their directions” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Thus, any initiation of such a movement and economic shift should ideally be led by First Nations in northern Ontario, with others working alongside them in solidarity to achieve collective goals.

Conclusion

Bear viewing in the GBR emerged out of a broader focus on nature and protecting the environment and wildlife habitat. While bear viewing can be a small and important part, a wider base in ecotourism and environmental protection is found to be an asset here. Falconer shared some valuable insight on this, stating that “If you are going to build a solid base in tourism, and it doesn’t matter where you are, having that base be nature and not a specific species is really important ... in much of our province and the rest of the country, it is more about the opportunity to bring people from all over the world who live in massively modified urban environments and who have never experienced anything like this” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Therefore, if northern Ontario is to establish organized bear viewing, one of the important first steps to be taken could be drastic changes in environmental protection policy and shifts to environmentally-friendly practices.

Moreover, climate change is threatening not only ecotourism and the environment we seek to protect, but the very habitat and lives of animals it relies upon. According to Falconer, the work done by RCF is almost entirely done through “the lens of climate change” as it “disproportionately effects some of these remotes areas” (Ibid). Wildlife and marine populations, including bears, salmon and herring, who “depend on a single

resource that is potentially vulnerable to climate change” become most threatened (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). Alternatively, Falconer suggests that more resilient natural areas, including “the Great Bear Rainforest or even northern Ontario, where there is less industrialization,” could become even more sought after in light of climate change. Eventually, as Falconer argues, “they may be the best examples of this and the only places in the world where you can go to have that kind of experience with wildlife in a wild place” (B. Falconer, personal communication, November 24, 2016). The notion that climate change will help ensure the success of ecotourism in North America is terrifying in light of the additional destruction it will cause, yet still a possible outcome.

In conclusion, bear viewing in the GBR appears to be the most promising and applicable model for northern Ontario to emulate. Despite its current limitations, which can mostly be attributed to it being in its early stages of development, bear viewing in the GBR exemplifies some notable strengths and benefits for settler and indigenous communities alike. This model, while lacking the organization and regulation of other bear viewing programs, proves that bear viewing and environmental movements can and should work hand-in-hand to transform interspecies relations and to foster solidarity with bears and nature more broadly. The lessons learned from the GBR about bear viewing, ecotourism, and indigenous empowerment will be useful for other locales seeking to make the same transitions from harmful and violent human-bear relations and resource-based economies.

II. Complementary Policies

a. Ecotourism Certification

It is evident from the bear viewing models examined that operating businesses and creating humane jobs in this sector can be challenging and both necessitate varying levels of experience, training, consultation, and financial investment. In addition, the most successful and low-impact examples of bear viewing are organized, carefully planned, and regulated in order to guarantee consistency. Ecotourism accreditation, a relatively new phenomenon, is believed by many to have the potential to foster sustainable and successful ecotourism, which includes guided wildlife viewing. It may be useful for guaranteeing low-impact and successful business in bear viewing and other wildlife viewing programs, as it can provide incentive for conservation and increase compliance with high standards of practice.

Many scholars, industry experts, and business owners now recognize the need for ecotourism certification and oversight in order to ensure standards are met and protections are in place (Honey, 2008; Buckley, 2003; Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003; Beeton, 1998). Others have critiqued ecotourism accreditation programs for their alignment with westernised views of nature, their complex and often inaccessible processes, and while they can provide some piece of mind to ecotourists, they are certainly not foolproof (Buultjens et al., 2010, p. 501). Eco-Tourism Africa, for example, has stated on their website that often, “compliance with criteria is not well monitored, and it falls to private initiatives to attempt to place some credibility on tourism organizations to recognize their attempts at real environmental sustainability and protection. The best way to do this is through a credible Certification Process, that not only gives recognition

where it is due, but counters the “green-washing” efforts of fringe organizations that do not always do what they say” (Ecotourism Africa, 2015).

Therefore, in order to counter greenwashing and other misuse of the term “ecotourism”, scholars like Honey (2008) have emphasized the necessity to establish “a uniform definition, clear standards, and globally recognized certification programs” (p. 28). Ecotourism certification can assist in preventing the term “ecotourism” from being used indiscriminately in any tourism that deviates from conventional tourism, or is related to nature just in the slightest (Honey, 2008). Further, I argue that the extension of this form of certification to include bear viewing could deter the rise of exploitative and unethical viewing practices, and reward low-impact guides and operators.

Indeed, ecotourism certification may prove advantageous for new and more established bear viewing programs. Certification programs that have been endorsed and accredited by governments and NGOs, such as Ecotourism Australia’s ECO Certification program, can represent and boost the success of environmentally responsible ecotourism or bear viewing operations. They can work with and advise their certified members in order to ensure that quality ecotourism experiences are provided, and that sustainable and ethical ecotourism principles (like the ones discussed in previous chapters) are guiding and informing ecotourism practices. According to Ecotourism Australia, ecotourism certification can be used to advise and work with a diverse range of operators, and this could include guided tour operators in bear viewing, those involved in accommodations, protected area managers, state and federal government agencies, as well as consultants, planners, and scholars (“About Ecotourism Australia,” 2017; “Ecotourism Australia Strategic...,” 2012, p. 2). At the very least, an ecotourism certification program can help

differentiate between genuine ecotourism operators, and other operators using harmful practices and seeking to falsely use the ecotourism label. In northern Ontario, this could help achieve success in bear viewing by creating networks and connections among certified operators and local organizations, as well as other organizations and ecotourists internationally.

There are multiple exemplary models of the important contribution of ecotourism certification programs in Canada and globally. Two existing accreditation programs in Canada discussed in earlier sections are the CFN's Guardian Watchmen certification program and the multi-level guide certification offered by CBVA. While there are no examples of ecotourism or wildlife viewing guide certification programs in Ontario currently, there are prominent examples of its potential in other parts of the world which could be imitated. For example, Australia's ECO certification program has shown that the most successful programs have multiple certification types, criteria, and levels, are constantly expanding and adapting to industry and community needs, establish partnerships with other agencies and organizations, and offer extensive auditing and accessible consultancy. The success of Ecotourism Australia's program, while not perfect, does demonstrate that the training, advising, planning, and marketing assistance offered by ecotourism certification programs can be invaluable.

However, in locales where community members may not have the necessary tools, education, and experience to create and operate bear viewing and ecotourism enterprises, accreditation programs should be accompanied by accessible training programs. This could create opportunities for local communities and operators with lower socioeconomic status and less access to resources. Ecotourism certification programs

seek to reward operators who have already established their business and meet ecotourism standards to varying degrees. As a result, this may not be appropriate for communities that are transitioning to ecotourism as they will need tangible assistance and financial support to get started, not merely the use of an ecotourism label or marketing services.

Evidently, there is a need for more accessible services, training, and ecotourism incentives in order to guarantee equal opportunities for operators. Perhaps online training and certifications, or free workshops and community information sessions would be relevant entry points for remote northern communities seeking to establish bear viewing programs and ecotourism more broadly. I agree with Buultjens et al. (2010) who suggest that any ecotourism certification program that prevents “traditional owners from undertaking the consumptive activities that they normally would” will not align with views of indigenous communities and will restrict their capacity to participate in any accredited ecotourism (p. 502). Therefore, if an ecotourism certification program is to be created in and for northern Ontario, it must be done with input from and involvement of local and indigenous communities, NGOs, and multiple other stakeholders based on the specifics of that setting. Furthermore, more equitable mechanisms need to be in place to ensure indigenous empowerment and to endorse their involvement in ecotourism and wildlife viewing on their own terms. This will be crucial for northern Ontario as a large segment of the population are indigenous.

b. The Great Bear Rainforest Agreement

The Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA), recently finalized and receiving massive media attention and international acclaim, is another important alternative and

area of possibility which could serve as a model for other locales seeking economic shifts to ecotourism and bear viewing. Assessment of this policy alternative proved challenging as the GBRA has only recently been finalized and has yet to be fully implemented. There are very few scholarly examinations of this final agreement to date. Therefore, existing policy documents, editorials, news articles, websites, and reports were collected and assessed in order to understand the benefits of such a policy alternative and undertaking. The GBRA is a useful policy model for northern Ontario in terms of its environmental protections, collaborative planning, and resource management strategies. It essentially substantiates the importance of planning, regulating, and protecting habitats in order to launch ecotourism in formerly resource-exploitative economies.

Background

The GBRA was formally established in 2006 through multiple agreements for land-use forged between the BC provincial government and First Nations (Guy, 2016, September 14). Covering over sixty-four thousand square kilometres of land, the GBR and Haida Gwaii is the earth's largest remaining coastal temperate rainforest, providing important habitat for a massive number of "vulnerable wildlife including grizzly bears, sea wolves, orcas, and northern goshawks" (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25). The GBR and Haida Gwaii are also known as the unceded territory of at least twenty six coastal First Nations communities, who make up nearly all of BC's rural population which can only be accessed by air or water transportation. Coast Funds has detailed the colonial and extractive history of the GBR and Haida Gwaii as follows:

"Historically, First Nations carefully managed the abundant natural resources of both land and sea, relying on their knowledge of seasonal cycles to harvest a wide

variety of resources without depleting them. They had absolute power over their traditional territories, resources and right to govern, to make and enforce laws, to decide citizenship and to manage their lands, resources and institutions. Modern times brought newcomers to the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii. They came to log the vast tracts of forest and fish the abundant salmon runs.

Throughout much of the last century, pulp mills, sawmills, logging camps, canneries, and mines extracted resources from First Nations' traditional territories despite their protests. While early resource extraction turned profits for companies and provided employment, there were few benefits to First Nations, whose communities suffered extensive economic, social and cultural damage.” (Smith & Sterritt, 2016, p. 2).

Thus, the impact of colonization is continuing and profound, with the GBR and surrounding coastal and rainforest resources, as well as human and nonhuman communities forever changed. Its appropriation from the cultures who were and are sustained by it led to it being exploited by ravenous commercial fishing and logging operations throughout BC's coastal regions (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25).

Interestingly, the Board of Inquiry Report (2017) provides additional information on the colonial history of human-grizzly relations in BC which is of importance here. Grizzly bears have existed in Eurasia and in North America for nearly seventy thousand years, and have survived multiple major extinctions, ranging in an eastern direction to Ontario and other regions including Ohio, Kentucky, and south to Mexico (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 4). The arrival of an influx of Europeans led to a dramatic decline in the range of movement and wellbeing of grizzly bears. This European

incursion also gave rise to the “fur trade, the gold rush, mining, cattle ranching, forestry, and building dams, settlements and transport routes” as well as increased gun use, all of which reduced the number and distribution of grizzly bears across the continent (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 4-6). The arrival of Europeans to BC also resulted in the dismantling and forced replacement of First Nation’s laws and governments with European-modeled structures of government.

These colonial structures have been resisted in a multitude of ways, and First Nations governments have continued to coexist with grizzly bears in their territories using diverse approaches. Many First Nations have done so by banning trophy hunting all together and showing great interest in bear viewing as an economic alternative that aligns with their traditions and values (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 10). Grizzly bears have essentially been wiped out in much of Canada as a result of colonialism. This is important to keep in mind going forward, as relations between colonial governments, First Nations, and grizzly bears have and continue to be effected by ongoing settler colonialism.

Given the importance of the GBR to First Nations communities, other animals, and entire ecosystems, its protection is incredibly important and valued. The GRBA process began in 1992, after many years of First Nations communities working disjointedly in the GBR. They began to meet collectively, have discussions about their shared concerns and the need for solutions, and formed an alliance and group called the Coastal First Nations (CFN) to address resource management issues in the GBR (Smith & Sterritt, 2016). From the beginning of this process, “the goal of the First Nations was to restore and implement responsible land, water, and resource management approaches on the Central and North Coast of British Columbia, and Haida Gwaii that are

ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable” (Smith & Sterritt, 2016, p. 5).

Evidently, CFN’s priority has been the protection of the GBR’s resources and coastal ecosystems, its cultural use, and the development of sustainable business (Guy, September 14, 2016). At the same time, it appears that the provincial government and forestry industry have sought mainly to secure a level of continued control and exploitation over the area for economic gain.

Fundamentally, the GBRA establishes newly designated protected areas, amounting to nearly five million acres, and reduced logging surrounding said protected areas, heightened inclusion of First Nations in “decision-making over their territories,” and new pledges to improve the wellbeing of human communities who rely on the GBR, particularly First Nations (Greenpeace, 2016). As McSheffrey explains (2016), “the Great Bear Rainforest agreements are one of the most complex multi-stakeholder conservation deals ever reached and world class model of environmental conflict resolution” (n.p.). The following section presents and evaluates the strengths, limitations, and essential features of the GBRA. The potential of the GBRA for other locales such as northern Ontario is also determined through careful analysis.

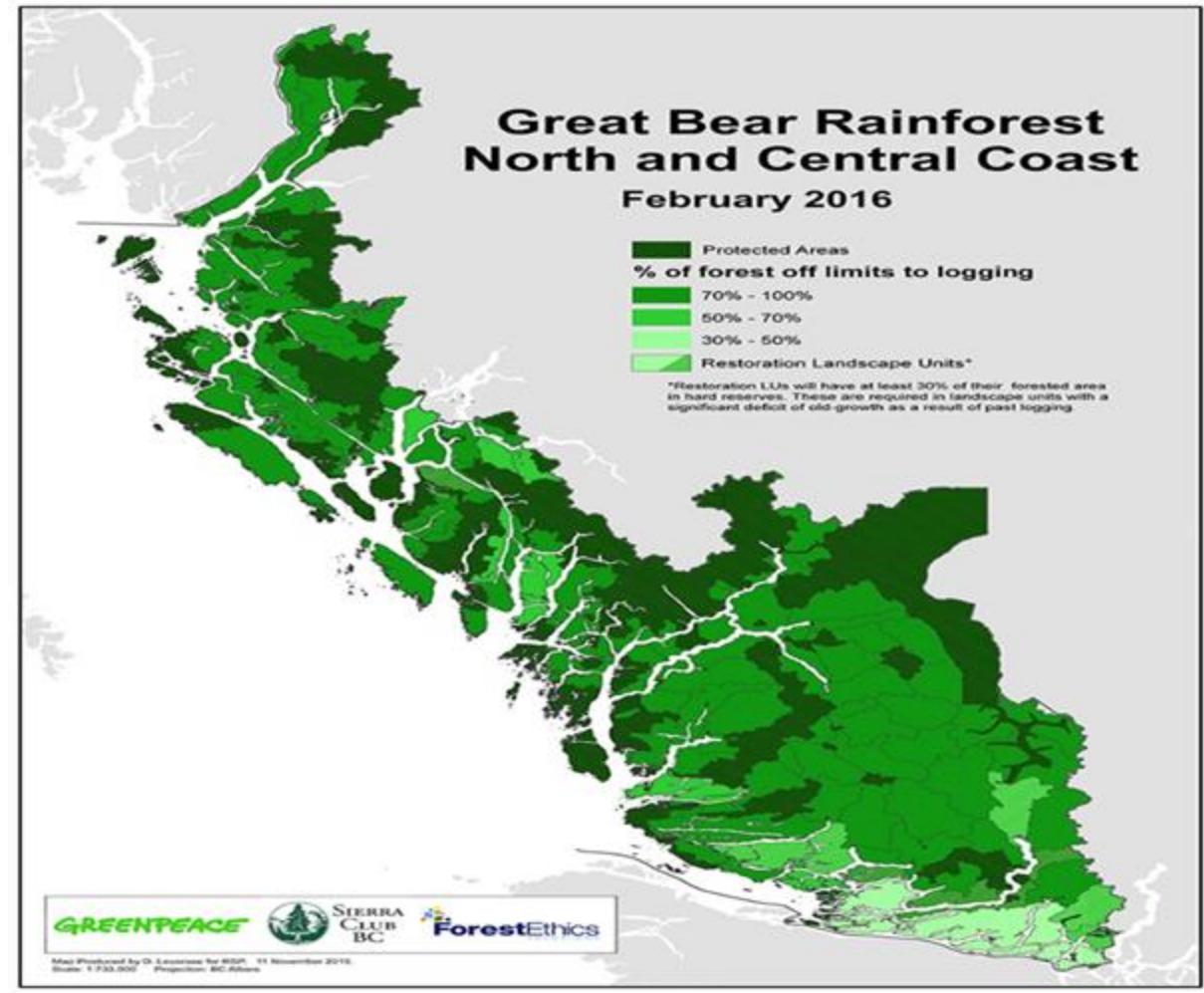


Figure 3: A map showing the percentage of logging still permitted by the GBRA in the Great Bear Rainforest (Great Bear Rainforest..., 2016).

Strengths

The GBRA is unquestionably an important policy achievement and potential model to be used in other contexts. It demonstrates the potential strength of several policy approaches and conservation features. The evident purported strengths of the GBRA induced from the data include shared-decision-making, economic supports, opportunities and funds for local communities, as well as alternative ecosystem and habitat management frameworks. While the GBRA is still in the early stages of implementation

and our understandings of its impact are limited, these notable features are detailed and assessed below.

Shared Decision-Making

Firstly, one of the central strengths of the GBRA is that it was formed through shared decision-making between First Nations governments and the province, and assisted by environmental NGOs. The input of First Nations governments and representatives has purportedly been included at every step of the process, and this has generated widespread praise. The voices of the people of Tiowitsis nation, for example, although spread across the province in reserves and various cities due to forces of colonization, were sought out through widespread outreach and meetings in order to include their input on the fate of their territory (McSheffrey, 2017, February 25). This thorough consultation is noteworthy.

Furthermore, Greenpeace confirms that the GBRA ensures “greater control by First Nations over their territories, including further measures for economic opportunities” (Greenpeace, 2016). In addition, and in order to ensure their own successful involvement, “the nations formed two governing bodies to represent them in negotiation: Coastal First Nations for those in Haida Gwaii and the Northern and Central Coast, and the Nanwakolas Council for nations on northern Vancouver Island and the South-Central Coast” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25). This involvement has greatly influenced the outcomes of the GBRA. Indeed, Art Sterritt, CFN’s previous executive director, found that the GBRA has resulted in monumental changes because, “by the time we [CFN] got to the end of this [process], we were actually writing legislation that was being passed by the Government of British Columbia” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25).

Here, while First Nations were included, it is apparent that the BC provincial government still holds veto power for new and existing policy. Still, this marks an important and positive change in government-to-government relations even if falls short of having decolonial potential.

In addition, the necessity of First Nations inclusion in the GRBA is ostensible when we consider the state of their communities, infrastructure, and services in BC and across Canada. Smith and Sterritt explains this, reflecting on the 1990s in BC:

“The region’s economy had dwindled to isolated logging camps, a much-reduced fishing fleet, and a handful of tourist lodges scattered through the region. Most First Nations communities were suffering from high unemployment and low graduation rates, limited infrastructures, poor access to healthcare, substandard housing, and low incomes. Piecemeal attempts at economic reconstruction had all failed and, with unemployment rates as high as 80 percent, no group of people in Canada faced a more urgent economic crisis” (Smith & Sterritt, 2016, p. 2).

Thus, protection of the GBR is not simply about land for CFN communities, but also about rebuilding people’s livelihoods in communities that have endured generations of “Third World conditions” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25). These communities have been forced to live with “Filthy drinking water, dilapidated homes” with people in reserves across BC and Canada also experiencing rampant poverty and illness. Now, the GBRA is an opportunity for them to mend these conditions and the lives of people in their communities. In addition, “Indigenous leaders were open to new partnerships, new economic opportunities and new methods of managing their land with only one condition: they would steward the territory moving forward, just as they had for

thousands of years before environmentalists ever painted ‘Great Bear Rainforest’ on a banner” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25). It would appear that this economic condition was honoured through the GBRA, with the creation of the Guardian Watchmen Program and Coast Funds. Whether or not the state of First Nations communities will be addressed and benefited by the GBRA and its economic assistance is yet to be seen.

While substantive improvements in relations between the BC government and First Nations communities have not been fully realised yet, several First Nations leaders have expressed optimism and gratitude for the GBRA. For example, the chief of the Heiltsuk First Nation, Marilyn Slett, illuminates the importance of the GBRA for their communities in stating that, “it is something we have supported because it aligned with our values and objectives. Our peoples have been here for tens of thousands of years, and it is our responsibility to steward our traditional lands...It’s part of who we are as indigenous people on the coast” (Hunter, 2016, September 23). Similarly, Dallas Smith, a previous member of the Coast Information Team, has also said in an interview that the General Protocol Agreement involved in the GBRA and signed between the BC government and eight coastal First Nation “was quite the evolution...Instead of being used as pawns in the overall discussion about the War in the Woods, we became the important players and started to build partnerships” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 25). This is an encouraging change.

While First Nations communities are seeing more benefits from this new government-to-government partnership than they have in the past, colonial relations between the provincial government of BC and First Nations communities persist outside of this agreement and are essentially unobstructed by it. “Shared” decision-making is

being presented as a shift in power over territory to First Nations by the BC government. This is deceiving, and an inaccurate depiction of the GBRA. Consultation and inclusion are not synonymous with decolonization, land repossession, and autonomy. Power imbalances and inequities are maintained by this policy to a degree, as veto power in decision-making and policy decisions still remains predominantly with the colonial provincial government and BC ministries. Furthermore, essentially harmful industrial activity is still permitted; even at a “reduced” level, land and water ecosystems continue to be damaged through the clearing of invaluable timberlands, trophy hunting, and commercial fishing operations. This ultimately has and will continue to impact the livelihoods and wellbeing of First Nations communities.

Economic Opportunity

Second, along with shared decision making between provincial and First Nations governments, the GBRA allegedly seeks to empower First Nations communities by increasing sustainable business and employment opportunities. The current study found several statements by First Nations leaders and community members, as well as environmental organizations, applauding the emergence of new and meaningful employment and businesses in coastal communities resulting from the GBRA. This has been largely accomplished through the establishment of the Coast Opportunity Fund, as its investments have increased First Nations employment at present. Certainly, Greenpeace has argued that the Coast Opportunity Fund is supporting “responsible development and conservation projects in the region” and “eco-tourism ventures have been established as further sources of income for indigenous communities” (Greenpeace,

2016). The Coast Opportunity Fund in particular looks to be an outstanding and promising feature of the GBRA.

Coast Funds, a result of the Conservation Investments and Incentives Initiative, established two streams of conservation funding for First Nations. Smith and Sterritt explain this funding:

“First, \$60 million dollars of private funds would be allocated to a conservation endowment fund would be dedicated solely to conservation management, science and stewardship jobs in First Nations communities. Second, \$60 million dollars of public funds would be used to invest in sustainable business ventures in First Nations’ territories and communities” (2016, p.9).

According to the Coast Funds organization, they have invested more than sixty-two million dollars to date in the coastal economy of British Columbia, funding more than two-hundred and fifty projects for First Nations communities. For example, one of the projects funded was the “commercialization of Kitsoo/Cai’xais’ Spirit Bear Lodge” as well as the “Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network to monitor, steward and protect coastal ecosystems,” which were detailed in a previous section (Guy, 2016, September 14).

In addition, project investments from First Nations governments have apparently resulted in the creation of six hundred and seventy new and permanent jobs, five hundred of which employ community members of First Nations. Notably, this is “equivalent to 9% of the total working age population of First Nations communities in the Great Bear Rainforest” (Guy, 2016, September 14). These new jobs are in “science and research,

ecosystem-based management, forestry, ecotourism, manufacturing, aquaculture, and more” (Guy, 2016, September 14). In addition, the funding provided through the GBRA may have increased the success of businesses, and is extending the limited seasonal employment and working seasons for First Nations members by multiple additional months (Hunter, 2016, September 23).

Furthermore, Coast Funds has been successfully partnering with coastal First Nations communities to create new and ecologically sustainable economic opportunities. This may be strengthening their communities through the creation of jobs and new business avenues. For example, the President of Nanwakolas First Nations Council has noted that “new aquaculture, ecotourism, and manufacturing business start-ups” have been created through this partnership (Guy, 2016, September 14). Douglas Neasloss, the Chief Councillor of Kitasoo/Xai’xais Nation in Klemtu British Columbia, has also praised this partnership in detail:

“In a short period of time we’ve succeeded in launching a diversity of new businesses and conservation initiatives that are strengthening well-being in our community. Spirit Bear Lodge ecotourism experiences are recognized around the world, Kitasoo Wild Seafoods exports sustainably harvested products internationally, and Spirit Bear Research Foundation supports a diversity of conservation science initiatives we’re undertaking. Our partnership with Coast Funds on these initiatives is an important part of our efforts to develop a conservation-based economy in the Great Bear Rainforest.” (Guy, 2016, September 14).

Additionally, successful ecotourism businesses, as a result of this partnership between various BC First Nations and Coast Funds, have emerged in Xwemalhkwa (Homalco) Nation in Bute Inlet, including Homalco Wildlife Tours.

Along with increased employment, economic interest, and investment in ecotourism, First Nations youth are also said to be benefiting from this economic rekindling of their communities and the opportunity to work as stewards on their territories. Mary Anne Enevoldsen, the Chief Councillor of Homalco Nation, has credited newly established wildlife tours and ecotourism with enabling “Xwemalhkwa youth to experience our traditional ways, share these with our customers, and with their elders who are also enjoying holistic benefits as they watch our youth grow culturally” (Guy, 2016, September 14). These economic and cultural opportunities are crucial because decolonization essentially “begins with an individual learning about who they are in relation to their Indigenous ancestors” (Aquash, 2011). Marilyn Slett, the chief of Heiltsuk First Nation, also emphasizes the benefits of training and new job opportunities for First Nations youth (Hunter, 2016, September 23). The importance of funding to help establish these new businesses and positions is also obvious. For instance, McSheffrey (2016, February 25) found that “In the Nanwakolas membership alone...has seen more than \$500,000 from the Economic Development Fund...[to] launch successful tourism initiatives for the Mamalilikulla Qwe’Qwa’Sot’Em, and run youth-to-elder culture and language camps for the We Wai Kum, We Wai Kai, and Kwaikah” (McSheffrey, 2016, February 23). Thus, the decolonial potential of the GBRA is manifest.

While notable, the GBRA and Coast Fund’s investments and employment may not be substantial enough to address the immediate concerns and capacity of First

Nations communities. According to Chris Roberts who is the Nanwakolas Council's economic development co-ordinator and a member of the We Wai Kum Nation, this fund will not have immediate success and benefits as "With a First Nations community that has no capacity, you can't just give them a \$3-million business to run because they don't know how" (McSheffrey, 2016, February 23). Indeed, McSheffrey finds that "the Coast Opportunity Fund has been "transformational" for many individuals, but Smith said it could be years before substantial human well-being outcomes are reached across the board, like improved employment rates and education enrollment." (McSheffrey, 2016, February 23). Thus, funding is crucial, although monetary assistance through the GBRA alone is not sufficient in assisting the transition from resource-exploitation to ecotourism for traditionally marginalized and oppressed First Nations communities.

Habitat Protection and Ecosystem Management

Third, in addition to the economic supports and benefits of the GRBA, habitat protection is significantly strengthened by it. The GBRA protects a substantial part, although not all, of the GBR from industrial activities which, in turn, also protects bear habitat. As detailed at the beginning of this section, and in addition to its objectives for First Nations culture and economy, the GBRA also has the central purpose of protecting, managing and conserving the GBR and its resources. It will purportedly achieve this in two ways: it limits commercial resource extraction and industrial logging operations, and it attempts to safeguard and preserve fragile habitat and biodiversity through the creation of new zoning and land management strategies. Indeed, Greenpeace boasts that "85% of the forested landbase of the Great Bear Rainforest totaling more than 3 million hectares becomes off limits to industrial logging. Key areas of wildlife habitat for rare spirit bears,

coastal wolves and salmon are conserved” (Greenpeace, 2016). Furthermore, McSheffrey (2016) states that “Bear dens, rivers, swamps, and estuaries are also off limits, and a complex system of eight new land use management zones addresses biodiversity, mining and tourism areas (BMTA). A conservancy has also been added to safeguard King Island, the seventh largest island in B.C. in the heart of Nuxalk territory, roughly 20 kilometres east of Bella Bell” (McSheffrey, 2016). Thus, the GRBA creates additional protections for irreplaceable habitat.

Specifically, the GBRA’s “Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM)” is argued by environmental organizations and the BC government to be “one of the most comprehensive conservation and forest management achievements of this scale on Earth” (“Great Bear Rainforest Backgrounder...,” 2016, February). EBM has two central goals, making it an extremely exemplary model: “low ecological risk (maintain 70 per cent of the natural levels of old-growth across all rainforest types) and high levels of human well-being” (“Great Bear Rainforest Backgrounder...,” 2016, February). The Rainforest Solutions Project explains the multifaceted nature of the EBM:

“Measures set a new global model for forest conservation that strengthens indigenous rights, increases wildlife and ecological resilience, and keeps carbon stored in old-growth forests as a result of avoided logging. The conservation model sustains (and in some cases aims to restore) the long-term health for all types of forest ecosystems in the region. The science-based goal agreed to by all parties, to maintain 70 per cent of natural levels of old-growth ecosystems across all forest types, will be achieved for most ecosystems and exceeded in many” (“Great Bear Rainforest Backgrounder...,” 2016, February).

In combination with the potential cultural, economic, and political strengths of the GBRA, its environmental triumphs make it an exceptional model for other locales seeking to improve policies to protect human, nonhuman, and environmental wellbeing. At the same time, there are noticeable shortcomings of the GBRA, which are elucidated below.

Policy Limitations

The GBRA touts many benefits and advantages for local communities and a number of important mechanisms for environmental and multispecies protection. However, there remain several critics of the GBRA for its ostensible limitations and omissions. In assessing its components, the current study revealed some of these limitations; deforestation is normalized and still permitted, other animals including grizzly and black bears are not afforded adequate protection from hunting or consideration, and the implementation and enforcement of the GBRA may be slow and lax. Although very little criticism was found in data collection, it is clear that the GBRA falls short of working towards interspecies solidarity, and this point will be clarified below.

Deforestation in the GBR

First, while the GBRA seeks to protect eighty five percent of the GBR, it leaves fifteen percent of the forest exposed to “sustainable” logging and habitat obliteration. The Spirit Bear Lodge General Manager and Guide Tim McGrady is openly critical of this. Controversially, “this agreement proposes to log 2.5 million cubic metres of old-growth forests every year for the next 10 years,” according to McGrady (Hunter, 2016).

Moreover, campaigns for the agreement were rooted in a determination to end all “ancient-forest logging” in the GBR. This is notable, yet a significant portion of the GBR is still unprotected and open to resource exploitation of varying levels. Evidently, the GBRA “enshrines the idea that ancient-forest logging is part of doing business in the Great Bear Rainforest. That’s been a significant change in the conservation movement” (Hunter, 2016).

Additionally, BC’s Liberal government is arguably greenwashing its image through the GBRA, a concern shared by Vicky Husband, a well-known veteran environmentalist in BC. In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, she problematized the dynamics: “it is impressive that environmental negotiators were able to get so much when the government wanted to give so little ... she is dismayed the deal has allowed the government to cast itself as green, when it is still allowing ancient forests to be logged and grizzly bears to be shot.” (Wernick, 2016, February 21). The BC government also exaggerated the protections being afforded to grizzly bears and habitat through the GBRA, and later apologized and rescinded those statements. The significant amount of deforestation which they are still permitting through the GBRA is being framed as minor and harmless. For example, the BC government insists that “The 15 per cent (550,000 hectares) that can be logged will be subject to the most stringent commercial logging legal standards in North America” (“Great Bear Rainforest Backgrounder...,” 2016, February).

Additionally, other forms of resource extraction appear to have been neglected by the GBRA altogether. In effect, limited measures for forest protection enacted by the GBRA are only part of what is needed in the GBR and BC as a whole. Further

environmental negotiations and resistance against extractive industry, such as tar sands and oil pipelines, and more strict and meaningful environmental policy are needed (McSheffrey, 2016). Therefore, the GBRA sets out to *conserve* or secure continued human commercial use, rather than fully protect and *preserve* the GBR and those who live there, both human and nonhuman, from further harm.

Trophy Hunting in the GBR

Second, as mentioned in the previous section on bear viewing in the GBR, the continuation of bear trophy hunting in the GBR ignores the wishes and self-declared ban announced by nine First Nations through CFN, as well as bears' interest in life. Since 2012, CFN, a group comprised of and representing at least nine BC First Nations communities whose territories overlap with the GBR area, have been enforcing their own trophy hunting bans. Moreover, CFN "announced a ban on trophy hunting in its territory and has been waging a high-profile campaign against the practice. Doug Neasloss, a spokesman for Coastal First Nations, said the province maintains it has jurisdiction over hunting in the area but the group's members disagree" (Stueck, 2016, April 3).

Doug Neasloss, the Chief Councillor of the Kitasoo Xai'xais First Nation, Chris Genovali who is the executive director of Raincoast, and Brian Falconer who is interviewed in this study have problematized the lack of support committed to ending the grizzly hunts in BC within the GBRA and by the BC provincial government (Neasloss, Falconer, & Genovali, 2016, February 13). Despite the ban on trophy hunting announced and campaigned by CFNs, the provincial government of BC has not taken action to end the hunts and to protect bears within the GBR. It continues to profit from the killing of other animals, including grizzly bears and black bears in the GBR. Pacific Wild has

stated that the BC Liberal Government supports trophy hunting and the killing of grizzly bears in the GBR, “even in protected areas and parks” (“Retrospective: The Great...,” 2016, April 9). Although the BC government had claimed in previous press releases and announcements that the trophy hunt bans would be enforced and sanctioned, “no part of the 2016 Great Bear Rainforest Agreement is dedicated to ending the trophy hunt of grizzlies or black bears. Adding insult to injury, the faint effort made to “end” the grizzly hunt applies to a minority of the trophy hunting that actually happens in the Great Bear Rainforest” (“Retrospective: The Great...,” 2016, April 9 ; Greenpeace, 2016). Thus the province still has not honoured the wishes of CFNs in this respect.

Furthermore, the response to the trophy hunting ban and campaign by the BC government has been misleading. Genovali (2016) has problematized the BC government’s position:

“While the announcement by the premier and Minister Steve Thomson essentially endorses the effort to buy out commercial trophy hunting businesses, undertaken by Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Coastal First Nations (CFN) several years ago, it commits no direct support, nor does it address trophy hunting by BC residents which accounts for 60% of the grizzly kill in the Great Bear Rainforest and in the rest of province... the B.C. government’s announcement regarding the commercial hunt is specifically applicable to CFN territory, which makes up approximately one third of the Great Bear Rainforest” (Genovali, 2016, February 15).

This relates to what Nora Burke (2004) has written and spoken about these features of colonization. She argues that “while Aboriginal peoples continue to be forced or

excluded from their lands, capitalist interests rush to invade their territories in attempts to seize resources from it. Indigenous nations remain culturally, economically and politically under attack within this colonial apparatus ..." (Burke, 2004). While they are allowed the opportunity to share in the task of deciding on appropriate policy for the GBRA, First Nations still lack veto power and are still forced to accept a considerable level of resource exploitation and oppression by the BC government and other capitalist interests.

Thus, the BC government seeks to retain its control as a colonial force over First Nations traditional territories in the GBR by refusing to honour their self-imposed ban of the trophy hunt for the past five years. As a result, Pacific Wild confirms that "The government has not respected the ban, so since declaring it, CFN have raised millions of dollars to buy-out commercial hunting rights in guide-outfitting territories owned exclusively by individuals or companies" ("Retrospective: The Great...", 2016, April 9). Even further, according to the Board of Inquiry Report (2017), the BC government has prioritized logging over grizzly bears designated as "species at risk" by ensuring the grizzly bear protections "do not unduly reduce the supply of timber and that the benefits outweigh any adverse impact to logging industry costs" (p. 11-12). Thus, they explicitly prioritize profit from logging over the lives of grizzly bears and the sovereignty of First Nations governments.

In response the government's corruptness, CFNs have committed to addressing the shortfalls of government by ending the grizzly bear hunts. According to Hernandez, they have largely done so for the "wellbeing for bears, their importance to indigenous culture, and the value they bring to the local tourism economy" (Hernandez, 2016,

August 21). Even alliances between CFN and environmental NGO's have been sparked by the BC government's refusal to waver on this issue. These groups are currently working strategically and in unity, and are substantiating that "rather than lobbying government for political action, a smaller-scale much more reliable way for tour operators to increase the area of protected plant and animal habitat is to buy or lease the land themselves, and establish private reserves funded from tourism revenues" (Buckley, 2004, p.9).

Consequently, capitalist interests continue to exploit resources and individual bears, among other species, despite immense opposition from CFNs, local communities, and academics. The need to dramatically reduce grizzly bear killings was exposed by a peer-reviewed report released in 2016. In this report, "Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria and Raincoast Conservation Foundation scientists in the journal PLOS ONE analyzed the provincial government's own data and concluded too many grizzlies are being killed in B.C. They found overkilling of grizzly bears by humans is common and that annual hunting mortality limits set by government are too risky" (Suzuki, 2016, February 11). Additionally, the trophy hunt is only one of multiple threats being faced by grizzly bears in BC currently.

Moreover, David Suzuki recently attested to the challenges being faced by grizzly bears. He argues that not only do they have slow reproduction rates, having less than three cubs every few years, but they face additional threats as well. Suzuki explains that bears:

"Also face threats from habitat loss, damage and fragmentation; cascading effects of salmon collapse and climate change; and death from poaching, vehicle and

train collisions and the inevitable adverse impacts of careless human behaviour. Grizzlies have already been eliminated or are currently threatened in 18 per cent of the province, including the Lower Mainland and most of the Interior” (Suzuki, 2016, February 11).

Thus, the work of CFNs and environmental NGOs to protect grizzly bears is invaluable and timely, as is research conducted by academic institutions and powerful advocates like David Suzuki.

The threats facing grizzly bears and other species must be studied and publicized in order to urge governments to take meaningful action for their protection. Along with the 2016 report, the Grizzly Bear Foundation of BC recently released the “Report of the Board of Inquiry” in February 2017. This report is described by the Grizzly Bear Foundation on their website as bringing “together the expertise, lived experience and knowledge of everyone from scientists to citizens to help us all understand more about grizzlies, how they are threatened, and what we can do to help them” (“The Board of...,” 2017). The report also identifies multiple threats facing grizzly bears in BC, including food availability issues, habitat destruction, human-bear conflict, as well as inadequate and fragmented management by the BC provincial government.

The Grizzly Bear Foundation includes in the report numerous recommendations for education, research and conservation, with valuable insight of human-bear conflict prevention, addressed to federal, provincial, local and regional governments of BC. Its findings are critical and cast doubt on the logic of the GBRA:

“As omnivores, grizzlies are adaptable, yes, as natural disturbances happen all the time to forests. However, the health of BC’s forests is suffering due to climate change and drought, as well as pine and spruce beetle outbreaks. Many who gave us input voiced their doubts on whether the government process for determining the amount of timber that can be logged is flawed and the amount cut thus excessive.” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 34).

This report and its recommendations could be an important resource not only for BC, but for other locales seeking to implement improved and comparable policy to the GBRA, and who wish to reduce human-bear conflict in nonviolent ways.

Additionally, it is clear from this data that even if the ban were fully endorsed by the provincial government, conflict between bears and residents would still go unaddressed and unsolved by the GBRA. For example, Lana Ciarniello, a BC wildlife consultant, argues that human-bear conflict is extremely common, especially in agricultural areas where farmers often shoot and kill bears to protect animals used for food. Moreover, she has proposed that “preventative measures including moving calves closer to farm houses, building strong barriers, storing grain, and keeping livestock away from the edge of forests can help keep bears away” (Trumpener, March 6, 2017). These measures are not included in the GBRA, and it is often local bear advocates who are forced to take on the responsibility of educating the public where the provincial government neglects to do so.

GBRA Implementation and Compliance

A third and final limitation evident from the data on this complex agreement is that the process of implementing its many mechanisms and new regulations is slow and compliance is difficult to establish. The Rainforest Solutions Project recently released a progress report on the “Great Bear Rainforest Legal and Policy Framework” between the government of British Columbia and that of First Nations, as well as environmental organizations and forestry companies. Yet, the progress report only details the commitments and progress made by NGOs and forestry companies, and not the BC government or First Nations governments. It has been precisely one year since the GBRA was announced, and many of the objectives, mechanisms, legislation, policy, and guidance set out for the Ecosystem-Based Management Framework (EBMF) have not yet been met. In the progress report, it is emphasized that “partial completion seriously risks the conservation gains of the visionary model” but that progress is also slowly being made (“Great Bear Rainforest Progress...”, 2017, February). Consequently, this partial completion of the agreement threatens conservation aims within the GBR the longer it takes to implement. Conversely, it is important to acknowledge that implementing policy of this magnitude cannot happen overnight, and limited data on the GBRA implementation success is available at this point.

Policy Lessons

The GBRA itself, and the process of accomplishing such an elaborate policy, exemplifies the importance of collaboration, lengthy deliberations and research, as well as political solidarity in planning and implementing effective environmental policy. The GBRA has been finalized at the same time that ecotourism and bear viewing have

become incredibly successful economic ventures in the GBR. This policy approach and the resulting spread of successful ecotourism and bear viewing in the GBR highlight important lessons for other locales and areas for improvement.

Primarily, the importance of NGOs and political alliances in working towards environmental, interspecies, and indigenous justice is highlighted by this agreement. The GBRA, comprised of multiple sub-agreements, were established through the cooperation of multiple NGOs, including Rainforest Solutions Project, Greenpeace, ForestEthics Solutions, BC's chapter of the Sierra Club, Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Pacific Wild, and Canopy (Greenpeace, 2016). In addition, several political and stewardship organizations of First Nations were involved including Coastal First Nations, Nanwakolas Council, North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society, Qqs Projects Society, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network, as well as Guarding the Gifts (Greenpeace, 2016). Thus, similar to the other case studies explored, the power of NGOs and indigenous organizations must not be overlooked, as they play an instrumental role in planning, fulfilling, and monitoring environmental policy.

Second, invaluable grassroots initiatives and long-term activism and solidarity were key in pressuring governments to form the GBRA and to pay attention to marginalized voices. Prior to the 1990s, and during the 1980s, First Nations members and environmental groups worked in solidarity, protesting and disrupting logging operations in the rainforests of BC. McSheffrey (2016) perfectly captured the conflict and resistance that sparked the movement leading to the creation of the GBRA:

“Two decades ago, when less than 10 per cent of the rainforest was protected, this kind of agreement among First Nations, timber companies and environmental

groups seemed unthinkable. The Great Bear Rainforest was the stage for bitter conflict including blockades, protests and international boycotts over logging in the ancient forests... By 1997, the Great Bear Rainforest was a battleground. First Nations including the Nuxalk were blockading timber companies and environmental groups were targeting wood and paper customers in Europe, Asia and the United States. Green groups called it the Great Bear Rainforest; industry and government called it the Mid Coast Timber Supply Area. First Nations were often furious with both...All parties agreed to a cease fire in 1999, but productive discussions were difficult. Years of trench warfare were not easily reversed, and relationships between stakeholders were toxic for years.” (McSheffrey, 2016).

Thus, the GBRA is a result of hard fought activism, collaboration, as well as strength and determination from indigenous communities. Similar alliances could be formed in northern Ontario in order to advocate for change, certainly between environmental, animal advocacy, and indigenous organizations.

Third, The GBRA provides a strong example of the power and potential of shifting from primary industry to ecotourism, and of the resulting economic and cultural benefits. Buckley (2004) has argued, quite pertinently, that “tourism is indeed replacing primary industries in many areas, but mainly through grassroots initiatives by landowners and management agencies, not government and tourism polices” (p. 9). The GBRA is a model that can be used to forge enriched relations between governments, local communities, and the environment and has been revered across the globe.

At the same time, as a stand-alone policy, the GBRA is inadequate. To clarify, without the work of CFN, environmental NGOs, and bear advocates, the GBR would

remain vulnerable and would continue on being only partially protected by the GBRA. Still, BC's First Nations councils have even been approached for advice and recommendations from other locales seeking to achieve similar goals. For example, it has been noted that "both the Nanwakolas Council and Coastal First Nations have been approached by Indigenous people in Nunavut, First Nations in the Boreal Forest, and aboriginal groups in Hawaii, the South Pacific, and South America. All sought advice on how to build relationships with governments and stakeholders in the fight to protect their title, lands, and cultural resources" (McSheffrey, 2016). The council of CFN may also be sought out in order to be consulted with by northern Ontario communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these strengths, drawbacks, and lessons should be taken into consideration if the GBRA is to be used as a model for northern Ontario and other locales. While the GBRA was formed between provincial and First Nations governments, power imbalances and colonial relations with industry and government are maintained by it. In addition, the agreement does not promote interspecies solidarity or nature solidarity officially, as the killing of grizzly bears is still legalised against the wishes of CFN and considerable industrial resource exploitation is still permitted. While the economic and cultural benefits for First Nations communities are significant, many feel that the GBRA falls short of its potential. Essentially, the GBRA allows BC's provincial government to capitalize on and present itself undeservingly as environmentally responsible through greenwashing. Specifically, the GBRA still permits environmentally detrimental practices in and around the GBR to varying degrees, maintains colonial power dynamics and

relations between First Nations, the provincial government, ministries, and caters to capitalist interests.

The GBRA also does not address or include mechanisms to mediate and prevent human-bear conflict. The recent Board of Inquiry Report (2017), discussed earlier, however, is useful and could be used to fill this gap. This report was sparked by the neglect of the provincial government and the GBRA's lack of attention to the concerns of CFN and local residents of BC about the grizzly bear trophy hunt. It, along with the revised GBRA, can be utilized as guidance for northern Ontario in planning and implementing intersectional, multispecies policy and a new economy. As noted in the Report, "recent empirical evidence, based on 54 years of data from BC grizzly bears, suggests that hunting has no effect on human-bear conflict" (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 40). Thus, similar to bear advocates in Ontario, they are recommending alternatives to current human-bear conflict protocols. This Report has made several enormously valuable recommendations for federal, provincial, regional and local governments to reduce human-bear conflict and to shift to more humane bear viewing and ecotourist ventures.

Of particular relevance for northern Ontario is that they propose education, conservation, and research as solutions to conflict. Their recommendations include: educating the public, particularly school children, about bears using accurate and informed curriculum (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 27); promoting alternative to lethal human-bear conflict management such as "use of electric fences and bear spray" in collaboration with local bear advocacy organizations (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 27); expanding the Guardian Watchmen Program "to more interested First Nations

communities, and crucially, “including supporting them to develop ecotourism infrastructure such as accommodations, *if this is of interest to them*” (my emphasis)(Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 32); completely terminating “all hunting of grizzly bears in BC” (p. 46); and regulating the “bear viewing industry in consultation with representatives of this industry” (Board of Inquiry Report, 2017, p. 54). These recommendations are advantageous and could be utilized in northern Ontario in order to mitigate human-bear conflict while implementing ecotourism and bear viewing.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Future Work

Bear viewing is a relatively new activity and area of humane work, and this study has confirmed that it can be a valuable and significant part of ecotourism. Through this study, I sought to identify and assess existing bear viewing and ecotourism programs to determine their viability for northern Ontario. The outcomes are encouraging, as the programs identified and examined in this study, including the GBRA, can not only be applied to other locales loosely and flexibly, but also have numerous environmental, economic, political, and social benefits that could address the diverse needs of northern Ontario. Below I summarize key themes as well as the collective strengths and limitations of the alternatives studied. I also consider the overall potential of this project and the contributions made to both the field of sociology and interdisciplinary understandings of human-bear relations.

Based on the findings of this qualitative study, the benefits of bear viewing programs appear to outweigh the limitations. Common strengths that cut across these case studies are their ability to prevent human-bear conflict and interspecies violence through careful management of visitors and tours, and the employment of well-researched and conceptualized viewing strategies which recognize the varying comfort-levels and individuality of each bear being viewed. With the partial exception of the GBR, the programs have successfully established protections for bears and their habitat in the respective protected areas, including banning grizzly bear hunting. While bear viewing in the GBR is still in its infancy, this is one of the most remarkable and promising models as coastal First Nations are leading its development and being

empowered by it economically, politically, and culturally. The opportunity for indigenous people to work in humane jobs on their territories alongside bears and other species as guides and stewards is invaluable, as is the opportunity for ecotourists to witness the resilience and marvel of bears as individuals.

Specifically, I argue that these case studies have important lessons for northern Ontario and other locales seeking to implement bear viewing, ecotourism, and policy for environmental protection. All of the bear viewing programs examined are expensive for operators and visitors, especially in the KGBS and GBR. Furthermore, these programs exist in remote locations, are lacking infrastructure, and have limited options for accommodation and transportation, making them largely inaccessible to those with lower socioeconomic status and disabilities. However, they all demonstrate the necessity of limiting the influx of visitors and development in order to ensure low-impact viewing and habitat protection, even if it does reduce profit and accessibility. Second, political alliances between local and First Nation communities and environmental NGOs are instrumental in the successful planning, implementation and monitoring of these programs and policy alternatives. These alliances and the work of committed activists have also proven useful in supporting grassroots movements seeking to end habitat and species exploitation. This resistance is essentially making bear viewing and ecotourism programs possible in places formerly dominated by commercial logging and other extractive industry. Third, and further highlighting the importance of this resistance, my findings show that these programs are all vulnerable to the deleterious effects of global climate change, and are threatened by resource extraction including commercial fishing and logging operations.

Finally, bear viewing within the MRSGS, KGBS, and GBR establish the importance of consistent and non-violent human-bear interactions for viewing to be successful and conflict reduced. This challenges popular understandings of human-bear relations and protocols set forth by wildlife management agencies. Finally, I argue that black bears appear to be devalued and remain unprotected across the bear viewing programs studied, with the partial exception of the Spirit/Kermode bear in the GBR. At the same time, grizzly bears are afforded significant protections from hunting and human negligence in the KGBS and the MRSGS, and increasingly in the GBR. These programs protect the habitat of numerous species both plant and animal within their respective areas, which may indirectly benefit black bears as well.

Yet I feel compelled to call for more than limited species protections for the purpose of human amusement and profit. Protection of, and respect for nonhuman animals, particularly those deemed wildlife such as black and brown bears, must extend beyond the boundaries of protected areas and into those where these animals are banished and treated violently. Although the protections afforded to grizzly bears (and sometimes for black bears) in these contexts are important and meaningful, the killing of brown bears and black bears (including the Kermode bear) continues outside of these protected spaces and programs. Moreover, the spaces allocated for bear viewing purposes remain anthropocentric, never free from anthropogenic impacts. Thus, I suggest that if the strong elements of these bear viewing models outlined in the previous chapter are to be utilized in northern Ontario, they must be accompanied by accessible training for local settler, indigenous operators, guides, consultation with First Nations communities, as well as ecotourism experts. There also must be broader policy changes and public education to

prevent and mitigate human-bear conflict. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the effectiveness and potential revival of Ontario's Bear Wise program and the Nuisance Bear Committee need to be examined.

In addition, the GBRA could be used as a broader policy model or guide to help propel a transition away from the exploitative resource-based economy and towards an ecotourism-based economy. Ultimately, protected areas and refuges are insufficient as stand-alone solutions to conflict and interspecies violence, especially given the current political climate in Canada and particularly in the United States. Furthermore, bear viewing should be part of a larger industry of ecotourism if it is to be implemented in northern Ontario, as employment opportunities and economic benefits from bear viewing alone would not be sufficient enough economically to justify an end to resource extraction and hunting. On a final note, the benefits and transformative potential of bear viewing for interspecies relations need to be examined further. In particular, I worry that humans viewing bears in these settings could create complacency or may misinform ecotourists who travel from urban settings. Seeing bears in this setting may distract from the reality and vulnerability of bears threatened by anthropogenic climate change, development, conflict and hunting, and fail to inspire advocacy and change. On the other hand, there may be benefits of ecotourists witnessing bears where they live, and if viewing can foster positive multispecies relationships, then that is a positive effect.

I. Recommendations

Given the growing interest in bear viewing, its potential economic benefits, and the growing disapproval of the spring bear hunt among resident hunters and communities, this is a perfect time to make seek out alternatives. A growth of humane jobs in bear

viewing and ecotourism would offer meaningful and rewarding alternatives to precarious work in other resource-based industries, and could provide culturally and economically beneficial for indigenous communities. This success and promise is elevated when these forms of work are coupled with accessible certification and training programs, as well as subsidies for business start-ups, and other environmental protections (like the GBRA). In light of these findings, and the insight gained from John Hechtel, Brian Falconer, and Jamie Hahn, I propose the following recommendations for northern Ontario.

First, in order to initiate a transition to ecotourism and bear viewing, the Ontario provincial government should be challenged to take a stronger stance on resource exploitation and the prevention of human-bear conflict and bear killing in the province. This assessment of the GBRA could be enlisted for guidance in enacting strict and meaningful environmental regulations that would prevent further deforestation and resource extraction in northern Ontario. Both of these changes would likely require a strong and lengthy movement of solidarity and resistance led by environmental organizations, animal advocates, academics and researchers, and indigenous communities across Ontario. In addition, the Bear Wise Program and the Nuisance Bear Committee need to be examined in order to determine their effectiveness and ways that they could be improved and expanded across northern Ontario. It became clear in interviews with all three participants that education and awareness of the public need to be emphasized in viewing programs involving bears and other animals; societal and ideological shifts are also necessary. The value of small programs to protect, rescue, and relocate bears are reduced when the bears' habitat and species survival are threatened by large-scale

practices and human negligence. Protecting them in a small vicinity and in a partial capacity is not enough.

Second, and as highlighted in the Literature Review and the Results chapter, extensive preliminary research needs to be conducted to determine and plan for several things. This includes where and how bear viewing and accompanying ecotourism could and already do take place in northern Ontario, which type of bear viewing program would be most appropriate and feasible, the possible impact of ecotourists and viewing on black bears and other species as individuals and as a population in northern Ontario, and the level of interest in and the possible benefits of certifications and training in guided viewing and ecotourism among northern communities. Most importantly, First Nations communities must be consulted with, included, and if they express interest, should be given the tools and resources necessary to oversee and operate bear viewing programs with the support and guidance of relevant ministries, organizations, and services. In order for this transition to be possible and successful, alliances must be forged between provincial and First Nations' governments, as well as with government agencies and non-governmental organizations. More formal and exhaustive research is needed on bear viewing and the specifics of northern Ontario's geography, economy, settler-indigenous dynamics, and human-bear relations in order to better understand and plan for the implementation of the prospective programs discussed here.

II. Study Contributions, Strengths, and Limitations

Contributions & Strengths

The findings of this study align with much of the literature on the topic, and confirm the importance of low-impact viewing, limiting visitor capacity, conducting thorough preliminary research, and collaboration. In addition, this study is important as it also builds from this literature in key ways, by paying attention to the experiences of brown and black bears and other species as individuals in bear viewing programs and ecotourism, to the accessibility of these activities for local communities, ecotourists, and prospective business owners. It also sheds light on the importance and growth of bear viewing in indigenous communities of British Columbia. In addition, conflicts between ecotourism (and bear viewing more specifically) and more consumptive industries such as hunting, forestry, and commercial fishing, were elucidated.

The benefits of viewing programs are evident, although more sociological examinations of their potential for transforming interspecies relations and settler-indigenous relations would be instructive. Collectively, the policy and programs examined here have reveal important insights about human-bear relations and the strengths of ecotourism in Alaska and British Columbia. This study has exposed potential areas of possibility for northern Ontario, and it highlights the extreme neglect of, and continued violence towards black bears in the ecotourism industry and beyond. This study reaffirms that conversations about human-bear relations, conflict, and ecotourism cannot solely revolve around the human animal or even brown/grizzly bears alone. These issues, and the potential solutions examined here, are complex and multispecies in nature.

Bear viewing and ecotourism programs studied here, including bear management alternatives, appear to relate to, and may be complimented by, compassionate conservation, a field of conservation that promotes protection for individual animals as well as populations (Wallach et al., 2015). This field emphasizes the principle of striving to do no harm, in acknowledgment that interventions may fail and create a need for “alternative management objectives and... alternate avenues for resolving problems” (Wallach et al., 2015, p. 1482). This study and the programs examined herein are examples that “showcase how actions consistent with compassionate conservation provide more effective and ethical outcomes” (Wallach et al., 2015, p. 1482). These alternative programs can serve as examples of what can happen when killing, particularly of black and brown bears, is moved to “the bottom of the conservation toolkit or removed altogether” (Wallach et al., 2015, p. 1482).

When combined with bear viewing and ecotourism programs, accreditation programs are also valuable if they offer accessible, context-specific services and training to local communities and business owners. In addition to the contributions of the bear viewing and ecotourism accreditation studied, although not anticipated at the outset, this study incorporates a critical recognition and consideration of the impacts of climate change on the ecotourism industry and wildlife viewing, as well as biodiversity more broadly. This is a notable distinction between this study and previous studies and literature on ecotourism and wildlife viewing (detailed in previous chapters). Anthropogenic climate change is, and will increasingly pose a threat to the tourism sector, bear viewing programs, and essentially all ecosystems and life on earth. Recent research (Mora et al., 2013) suggests that the effectiveness of human conservation efforts,

including the success of protected areas, will be significantly affected by climate change in the near future.

Accordingly, anthropogenic climate change and its impacts must be taken into consideration when assessing and discussing the economic, political, social, and environmental potential and longevity of bear viewing and ecotourism. I challenge academics to explore new ways that ecotourism policy and wildlife viewing programs can be used to prevent and alleviate climate impacts, challenge colonialism, and end exploitative and extractive industrial practices. At the same time, this is a call to action for conservationists, wildlife advocates, policy makers, and communities who seek to stand in solidarity with other species and with environment. A transformation of this magnitude demands alliances be rooted in a commitment to decolonization and interspecies solidarity.

In addition to contributing a multispecies study to the field of sociology, I have also expanded upon the IBPA framework out of necessity. Specifically, I incorporated multispecies considerations in the IBPA framework in order to contribute an analysis that takes into account the experiences of other animals, as this framework is quite anthropocentric. When using the guiding questions and principles of the IBPA to analyze the impact of policy on other animals, I was able to gain new perspective and seek out new insights on how other animals may experience and be impacted by bear viewing and environmental policy. I believe that this study demonstrates new ways of engaging in multispecies policy analysis, and carefully balances considerations for human and nonhuman animals in assessing alternative programs and policy. The IBPA framework prompted me to ask who benefits, who is disadvantaged, and who is excluded or

empowered by the alternatives examined. In using these guiding questions, I sought not only to examine human experiences with bear viewing and the GBRA, but the experiences of other species and the environment as well. This study highlights the impacts that key bear viewing programs in North America have on local communities with a dual emphasis on humans and other animals, focusing specifically on the neglected experiences of black bears and grizzly bears within these low-impact bear viewing contexts and connected policy.

Limitations

While I sought to achieve a number of ambitious objectives, and the contributions and strengths of this study are many, there are also some limitations. Most markedly, the voices of indigenous communities, women, and other impacted members of local communities are lacking. My attempts to interview an indigenous participant located within the Great Bear Rainforest were unsuccessful, unfortunately. Many of the industry experts who I contacted and those I interviewed were all men. I believe that this absence of marginalized voices limited the scope of my analysis of alternatives, and ultimately the overall thoroughness of this paper. This may also reflect a lack of diversity in the leadership of this industry as well.

Regrettably, along with the absence of indigenous and other marginalized voices, this study's inclusion of bear's lived experiences is lacking as is multispecies data on the case studies examined. The experiences of brown and black bears as individuals could not be fully illuminated, as experts on bear ethnography and the experience of bears in these programs were not incorporated because of the limited and specific scope of this study. Lastly, the timing of this project, and specifically with the GBRA only being

finalized recently, means that there is limited data available. Thus, the programs and policy that I assessed could change, more literature and policy information could emerge, or they could become less suitable as models for northern Ontario in the near future. Nevertheless, the creation of a program in Ontario similar to those explored in this study must be rooted in indigenous empowerment, and a respect for black bears and other animals as sentient, autonomous individuals who have complex needs and desires of their own beyond the economic or cultural value we impose upon them.

Chapter 7: References

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